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# DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT

BISHOP WELLDON



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**THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF  
DISESTABLISHMENT AND  
DISENDOWMENT**



# THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT

## THREE LECTURES

## DELIVERED IN MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL

BY

JAMES EDWARD COWELL WELLDON, D.D.

## DEAN OF MANCHESTER

## LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1911

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## P R E F A C E

IT is the custom of the Dean and Canons of Manchester Cathedral to give courses of lectures during Lent and Advent on subjects of theological and ecclesiastical interest. My colleagues Canon Scott and Canon Hicks, who is now Bishop of Lincoln, have published some of their lectures which were so given, and I hope therefore I may not be wrong in publishing mine. The lectures attempt to deal in as impartial a spirit as possible with the religious aspects of disestablishment and disendowment. For in my eyes it is infinitely more important that the people of England should be religious in heart and life than that any one Church should gain or retain a superiority over all others.

The lectures were delivered to audiences not of experts and students, but of persons who may not unfairly be considered as representing the proverbial man in the street. But there is hardly any more vital problem of religion in the present

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day than to get the man in the street out of the street into the Church. The audiences were not specialists; hence the lectures are free from technicalities. They were not always the same persons; hence some thoughts and even phrases are repeated. But according to my experience repetition is an almost essential means of producing conviction in men's minds.

I ought perhaps to add that a great part of the third lecture has appeared as an article in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, and is now reprinted with the Editor's kind consent.

J. E. C. WELLDON.

*March 1911.*

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# DISESTABLISHMENT AND DISENDOWMENT

## LECTURE I

### CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING THE EXISTENCE OF A NATIONAL CHURCH

IT will be well for me to explain at the outset why it is that I propose to give some lectures during Advent upon the relation of Church and State, and why it is that I propose to give them here.

You will, I feel sure, do me the justice to admit that, since I came to Manchester, I have studiously guarded the pulpit of the Cathedral against the intrusion of politics. I dislike and disapprove political sermons, meaning by such sermons, sermons preached in the interest of a political party. If ever they are preached from this pulpit, they are opposed to my judgment and my wish. For it seems to me that a clergy-

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man or any minister of religion who takes an active personal part in political warfare, and still more one who drags his politics into the pulpit, may do grave injury to his own spiritual influence in two ways. He alienates a certain number, probably a considerable number, of men and women, whether by driving them from church altogether when he is the preacher, if not at other times as well, or by exciting in their minds, when they hear him, a prejudice against his teaching. It is far more likely, if he frequents political meetings and declaims upon political platforms, that he will lower himself, and, so far as lies in him, the Church which he represents, to the level of politics than that he will elevate political controversy to the high and proper level of religion. For it must be frankly recognised that the spirit or atmosphere of religion is, or at least ought to be, different from that of politics. The politician is a fighter; the preacher is a man of peace. The politician tries to win votes; the preacher longs to save souls. It is the politician's business to keep his eyes fixed upon the faults and follies of the party to which he is opposed; it is the preacher's office to look for the good

in all Christian men and Christian Churches. Lastly, the politician does not so much as aspire, unless perhaps on rare occasions, to lift his audience above the accepted worldly standard of right and wrong; but the preacher inculcates and emphasises the will of Jesus Christ.

All this is true, and I would strongly insist upon the truth of it; but it does not follow that nobody who speaks from the pulpit may at any time or in any circumstances offer his fellow-Christians or his fellow-citizens any counsel upon the secular topics of the day. There are some subjects which stand as it were upon the border-line between religion and politics; they are moral subjects, directly affecting the health and character of the people at large—such as education, temperance, the evil of sweating and the need of providing decent houses for the poor. I cannot think that a clergyman is debarred in virtue of his sacred office from touching, either outside his church or within it, upon these subjects. It is indeed desirable that he should regard them not from a political but from an ethical or religious standpoint. But even a subject which is generally recognised as poli-

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tical, if it approaches the boundary-line where morals and religion march, may, I think, be rightly treated from the pulpit, so long as it is treated not politically but in a truly religious spirit.

It is in this spirit that I shall try to enter upon the difficult and delicate subject of the relation between Church and State in England. I choose to speak of it here, not in any hall of the city, but in the Cathedral, because I wish to consider it religiously. It will be my aim to lay before you some considerations upon a matter of deep and almost vital import to the State as well as to the Church. But these considerations will be essentially religious. Politics I shall, as far as possible, discard from my view. There will, I hope, not be in my lectures a single sentence which can be justly resented by Conservatives or Liberals, by Churchmen or Nonconformists. I have no thought of scoring an unfair point for one side or another. It would be idle to pretend that I do not entertain a definite opinion upon the particular relation of Church and State which is involved in the establishment of a national Church. Yet I do not greatly care to

make proselytes. It would be no disappointment to me if two persons who hold different views about an ecclesiastical establishment, as they leave the Cathedral at the end of my lectures, were to remark each to the other that I had said nothing to make them think otherwise than they thought when I began the lectures. The object which I have at heart is that, in arriving at a judgment on a grave national issue, whatever line they may ultimately adopt, they may not fail to take account of certain serious facts and possibilities which are too often, I am afraid, obscured, if not ignored, in the dust and storm of party politics. In a word, the simple question which I would ask and answer is this: In the matter of the relation between Church and State, what is best for Christianity? What is best for the moral and spiritual welfare of the people?

Outside the walls of the Cathedral this question may appear to be political. But here at least it is a religious question.

You have no doubt observed that in the syllabus issued as preparatory to these lectures I have stated my intention of regarding the

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question of a national Church under three general heads, viz. :—

1. Considerations affecting the existence of a national Church.
2. The conditions under which it is possible to maintain a national Church in the present day.
3. The probable consequences of disestablishing and disendowing the national Church of England.

It is evident that these are matters which cannot be kept wholly distinct. They overlap one another to some extent, and in treating any one of them it will be difficult to avoid trenching more or less upon the others. But still they are so far separate that they can be separately discussed in these lectures.

Let me say at once that if I do not dwell upon the historical aspect of the Church of England as the national Church, it is not because I am unaware or unappreciative of its significance. I do not forget the strong words used by the late Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons during the debate upon the resolution moved by Mr. Miall in 1873 for the disestablishment and

disendowment of the Church: "The Church of England has not only been a part of the history of this country, but a part so vital, entering so profoundly into the life and action of the country, that the severing of the two would leave nothing behind but a bleeding and lacerated mass. Take the Church of England out of the history of England, and the history of England becomes a chaos without order, without life, and without meaning." History counts for more even in a democratic age than most people realise. The past exercises a mysteriously subtle influence upon the present and the future. An institution, like a tree, which strikes its roots deep down in the soil will outlive the angry blast of many storms. It may even afford a certain help and protection to the critics who assail it. There is a touching Eastern adage which says that "The tree by its shadow defends the woodman who fells it from the sun."

If I do not enter at length into the history of the national Church, the reason is that I do not think the question of establishment will be settled by reference to historical arguments. It is not what the Church was or how she became what

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she has been ; it is what she *is* that will be the determining factor in her life. The present age is utilitarian ; it judges institutions, not excepting the Throne itself, by the standard of public utility. However ancient and honourable, therefore, may be the history of the Church, she will not survive, nor will she be worthy to survive, as a national institution, unless she subserves, and is recognised by the nation at large as subserving, a valuable national purpose in the present day.

It will be enough for me, therefore, to state the main lessons of history as bearing upon disestablishment and disendowment. I believe them to be indisputably true ; but whether they are disputed or not is immaterial to the argument of my lectures.

The first is that the Church, although generally said to be established by law, was never established by any legislative Act of Parliament. Upon this point I may cite two competent authorities. The late Professor Freeman says : “ There was no moment when the nation or its rulers made up their minds that it would be a good thing to set up an Established Church, any more than there was a moment when they made up their

minds that it would be a good thing to set up a Government by King, Lords, and Commons.”<sup>1</sup> Again he says: “As we see at this moment one religious body which is ‘established,’ and several religious bodies which are not ‘established,’ there is the strongest temptation to think that one was at some time or other picked out in some especial way to be ‘established.’ A truer statement of the case is to say that the Established Church is a religious body which once was co-extensive with the nation, but which has ceased to be so. The Established Church is ‘established’ not because of any particular Act of Establishment at any particular time, but because it once was the nation.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Mr. Arthur Elliot says: “The Church never was established in the sense in which the Education Department or the Post Office has been established. It is as much part of the original constitution of the country as the monarchy, which in point of fact it long preceded. Its position is of course defined and regulated by law, but it does not owe its origin

<sup>1</sup> *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 41.

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as an institution to any definite Act of the Legislature or other sovereign authority.”<sup>1</sup>

There is, then, no Act of Parliament establishing the Church. There is no known year in which the Church came to be established. The establishment was not built like a house, but it grew like a tree. The national Church is not the creation of the State; it was originally the State itself—the State in its religious or spiritual aspect. It would be truer to say that the Church created the State than that the State created the Church. For the Church is older than the monarchy itself. England became one country ecclesiastically under Archbishop Theodore a century and a half before it became one country politically under King Egbert. Even to-day every citizen of the State is in the eye of the law *ipso facto* a member of the Church, unless he voluntarily disclaims and disowns his membership. But when there was only one Church, and the Church was co-extensive with the State, as all the citizens were Churchmen or Churchwomen, it was natural, and in fact almost necessary, that the Church should assume a national character.

<sup>1</sup> *The State and the Church*, p. 3.

The Church and State were, so to say, the same building, regarded from different points of view, as a cathedral is the same building, whether you look at it from outside or from inside. The nation as regarded from outside was the State; the same nation as regarded from inside was the Church.

It is evident that the Church ceased to be national in the sense of being co-extensive with the State, as soon as the one Church of which all citizens were members was broken up into a number of Churches. In that sense she has never been national since the Reformation. Since then she has been in fact, if not in theory, the Church of a large number of the citizens, but not the Church of all. Whether a Church can justly remain a national Church when she includes a portion of the citizens of the State but not all the citizens, is a question which I hope to discuss in my next lecture. For the present it will be enough to say that the Church was once national in one sense, and that she is now national, if at all, in another sense. She was once national because she was identical with the State. She is now national because the

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State, being different from the Church, has chosen to assign to her, or to recognise her as possessing, a national character.

There is an obvious gain to the State if all the citizens are united in religion. It has sometimes occurred to me that modern historians are a little unfair towards the distinguished men, whether Churchmen or statesmen, who in bygone days fought against religious liberty. We are all more or less the creatures of our own time. We see the motes in the eyes of our ancestors ; we do not so easily see the beams in our own eyes. We build the sepulchres of the prophets ; yet if we had been their contemporaries we might well have been their persecutors also. The sense of historical perspective is difficult to acquire. Religious intolerance is always evil ; yet some of the wisest thinkers in olden times were religiously intolerant, not because they were worse men than we ourselves, but because they saw or thought they saw that the State would be strong if it were one in religious faith and practice, and that it would be weak if it were distracted by conflicting creeds and warring Churches. I do not say they were right ; I say only that, if they

were wrong, their error was venial. For it is impossible to look upon the present religious state of Great Britain, with all the loss and pain and bitterness of spirit arising from the antagonism of the different forms of Christianity, and not to reflect that, if unity in religion could be attained, it would be a blessing of unspeakable value to the nation.

But whatever was the origin of the national Church, whatever is the formal or legal significance of Establishment as expressing the actual relation between the Church and the State, there can be no doubt that it is within the power of the State to modify or to determine that relation. The State did not create the national Church ; but it has recognised the Church as national, and it may decline to recognise the Church as national any longer.

So much it has seemed well to say upon the character of a national Established Church.

Secondly, let me state—what is also, I believe, entirely true—that, as the Church was not originally established, so neither was the payment of tithes originally initiated by any Act of the State. Here I touch, of course, upon the endowment, as

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distinct from the establishment, of the national Church.

The history of tithes is indeed somewhat obscure. It has been investigated by many high authorities, especially by Selden and the late Lord Selborne; but as is apt to happen with high authorities, they do not always agree. I can only tell you in a few words my own opinion. The payment of tithes was not originally enacted by the State. It was a rule of the Church. The Church taught, in conformity with the Mosaic law, that a Christian should devote a certain proportion of his worldly goods—generally one-tenth part at least—to religious objects. Such was the teaching of the Church, and her children obeyed it. But when Church and State were one, a rule of the Church easily passed into a law of the State. If a person refused the payment of tithes, he was not only a bad Churchman but a bad citizen. It never entered into people's heads in early times that the State ought not to concern itself with the citizens' religious duties. The State and the Church were one, and they were one both politically and religiously.

It is not, I think, possible to put the case

respecting tithes more clearly or more fairly than in the language of Professor Freeman and Lord Selborne. The former says: "The tithe can hardly be said to have been granted by the State. The state of the case rather is that the Church preached the payment of tithes as a duty, and that the State gradually came to enforce the duty by legal sanctions."<sup>1</sup> The latter says: "The payment of tithes originated in the acknowledgment of a moral or religious obligation, supposed to be incumbent on Churchmen generally; which, after acquiring first the force of custom, and afterwards the sanction of ecclesiastical law, passed, with the rest of that law, into the national jurisprudence of our own and other Christian countries."<sup>2</sup>

Tithes, then, are properly religious dues to which the State long ago gave legal sanction.

In these circumstances I do not think there is ground for surprise at discovering contradictory theories about the obligation of paying tithes. It is true that the State did not originally exact the payment of tithes. But it is equally true that

<sup>1</sup> *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *A Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment*, chap. vii. p. 125.

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tithes would not have been everywhere paid without the authority of the State. One person, then, will repudiate the idea that the Church derives her tithes from the State. Another person will insist upon the fact that she owes the payment of tithes to the law, and therefore to the State. It is pretty certain that, if a well-informed historian were asked whether tithes were the gift of the State to the Church, he would say they were not such a gift. Mr. Gladstone said so as strongly as Lord Selborne. But it does not follow that, because the State did not originally make a grant of the tithes, it did not afterwards enforce payment of the tithes under legal sanction, or that it cannot withdraw the sanction so given.

For my own part I must admit that I entertain a strong dislike to the diversion of ecclesiastical funds from spiritual to secular purposes. There may indeed be circumstances in which it is not wrong so to divert them. It is possible that the pecuniary resources of a Church may come vastly to exceed the Church's normal and legitimate needs. This was the plea advanced, not, I think, unfairly, for the partial disendowment of the Church of Ireland. But where it is necessary

and legitimate to touch ecclesiastical property, concurrent endowment, if it is possible, is in my eyes a policy far preferable to secularisation. The deeply rooted antipathy in Great Britain to the concurrent endowment of Christian or religious bodies is one of the strangest phenomena in the modern world.

Yet while it seems to me that the title of the Church to a large part of the property vested in ecclesiastical corporations, and especially to the tithes, was originally independent of any legislative action taken by the State, I do not feel that Churchmen can justly hold up hands of holy horror at disendowment in itself, as if the alienation of ecclesiastical property were always and everywhere a sacrilege. For the Church of England has acquired a great deal of property by alienation. At the Reformation the State, or the Crown acting in behalf of the State, took away large funds from the Church of Rome and transferred them to the Church of England, or, to put the case more accurately, took them away from a Church in communion with the See of Rome and transferred them to a Church not in communion with the See of Rome; nay, it

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took away the property of the religious houses of the Church altogether and transferred them in a large measure to secular persons. The lay impro priators of the great tithes are standing witnesses to the authority which the State has claimed and exercised in disposing of the property of the Church. The State so acted at the Reformation because the property in ecclesiastical hands was not used, as the nation held, for the national good, and for the same reason it may act in the same way again.

In so saying I do not speak of the legal or constitutional right inherent in the State. The State in the British Isles is omnipotent; the Constitution sets no limit to the authority of the Legislature. There are things which the Government of the United States under the Constitution cannot do; there is nothing which Parliament cannot do.<sup>1</sup> No doubt it is true that the State may be guilty of moral injustice to the Church, but only in the sense in which it may be guilty of similar injustice to the universities or to other public bodies. Probably

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. A. V. Dicey, *The Law of the Constitution*, lectures ii. and iii.

every class of citizen appeals in turn to the moral law when it feels itself to be oppressed or threatened by the action of the Legislature. But if the morality of putting the property of the Church or any part of that property to a secular use is called in question, the answer seems to be that the State may rightly secularise that property, if in the judgment of the people it is not used for the public good ; but it may not justly secularise it in any other circumstances.

What, then, is the upshot of these considerations ? It is that the right or wrong of an established and endowed Church depends upon circumstances ; there is no absolute right or wrong. It is impossible to maintain that there ought always and everywhere to be such a Church, or that there ought not to be such a Church anywhere at any time. And if so, it becomes necessary to inquire on general grounds what are the advantages or the drawbacks attaching to such a national acknowledgment of religion as the existence of a single national Church, when there are other Churches in the nation, affords and attests.

I hold that a nation is fully competent to

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establish and endow a national Church. Still more clearly is a nation competent to maintain a Church which has been established and endowed for many centuries. But not less do I hold that a nation may act within its moral as well as within its legal rights when it decides upon disestablishing and disendowing a national Church.

I am, of course, aware that this statement contravenes the favourite theories of some political and ecclesiastical thinkers.

There are still persons, and there were many more persons in former days, whose conviction is that it is the duty of the State to adopt, and within certain limits to enforce, a particular religious creed. That was Mr. Gladstone's view when he published his well-known treatise on *The State in its Relations with the Church*, in 1838—the treatise so strongly assailed by Lord Macaulay. It is, I conceive, the view of the Roman Catholic Church, at least in respect of the countries which are predominantly Roman Catholic in religious faith. It was a natural and almost necessary view in the days when all citizens were members of the same Church.

It has won a memorable recognition in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. But in proportion as religious divisions have increased, this view has become less easily tenable, and it is now seldom maintained in open argument.

There is the opposite view, that the State is in its nature debarred by the will of God and by the law of Jesus Christ from taking any cognisance of a Church or of religion. Extremes meet here strangely enough; for it is the view of extreme High Churchmen in the Church of England, and it is also the view of those Nonconformists who are popularly known as Liberationists. Perhaps, when extremes meet, they generally meet in error. The view of which I am speaking is essentially not political but religious. It is advocated by men who feel that religion is a matter of the Church or of the individual conscience alone; that it is something too high and too holy to be touched by the profane hand of the State. It will be best to quote this view as expressed in a resolution which was passed in the month of April 1884 at the conference held for the purpose of founding the society which was originally called

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“The Anti-State Church Association,” and is now called “The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control,” or popularly “The Liberation Society.” The resolution ran as follows: “This Conference, while emphatically disclaiming all intention to assail any Church apart from its connection with the State, is constrained by a deep sense of obligation to Jesus Christ, the sole Head of the Church, to express its solemn determination to persevere in its opposition to the principle on which State establishments of religion are founded; and consequently distinctly disavows the scriptural authority of all State establishments of religion, and of all State endowments of religion, under any of its denominations, and explicitly asserts the entire independence of the Church of Christ, which is to be secured only by the practical admission of the principle of self-support and self-extension, as imperatively demanded by the authority of the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon this resolution it is natural to remark that, although the Nonconformists are chiefly

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the first Anti-State Church Conference*, p. 43. See *The Case for Disestablishment*, p. 2.

prominent in exposing the alleged grievance, it is not they but High Churchmen who are the chief sufferers from it. If the Nonconformists were impelled by their conscientious belief to remain members of the Church, while conscientiously objecting to its alliance with the State, they would suffer an undeniable hardship; but if they need not and do not remain members of the Church, but can and do become members of religious bodies which are not, in their judgment, associated with the State, then the hardship is not theirs, and the wrong which they aspire to redress, if it exists, is done not to them but to Churchmen. There is a certain Quixotic spirit in the attempt of Nonconformists to liberate Churchmen from a yoke which Churchmen, or most Churchmen, do not feel to be galling.

However, the ground of Liberationism, whether within the Church or without it, is, I think, practically summed up in the well-known saying of our Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world." The opponents of the Established Church do indeed quote other texts as well as this; but it is upon this that they chiefly rely, and

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the others they interpret in the light of this text. For they understand our Lord to assert in this text that His Church must not stand in any definite relation to the world, but must remain clear of all worldly connections.

I cannot but think that this interpretation of the text rests upon an ignorance or misunderstanding of the Greek language. The preposition translated "of" in our Lord's words means not "belonging to" but "emanating from." Its English equivalent is used in the same sense as in the language of the Nicene Creed, "God of God, Light of Light," *i.e.* God proceeding from God, Light emanating from Light. So, then, what our Lord said was not that His Church should not be related to the world—on the contrary, He taught by the parable of the leaven how close that relation must be—but that the spirit, the principle, the initiation of His Church must be not secular but divine. So far from teaching that the Church must stand in no relation to the world, He taught that the Church must beneficially touch the world at every point, must penetrate and permeate and so gradually consecrate the world,

provided only that she does not forget or forego her spiritual origin and character. In other words, as His ideal of the individual Christian life was that a man should not go out of the world, like an anchorite, but should sanctify the world by living in it, so His ideal of the Church's life was that, being in the world, the Church should not be of it, but should regenerate and consecrate it by her influence.

It is always well to test a theory by reference to concrete circumstances.

The Jewish Theocracy is generally believed to have borne the stamp of express divine authorisation. It is vividly depicted in the early books of the Old Testament. But its essential feature is the interpenetration, nay, the practical identification, of Church and State. You will not regard me as implying that the same divine authority attaches to any modern constitutional system. I say only that, when God did ordain a constitutional system, He ordained a union of Church and State.

There have been, as I have already stated, historical epochs of Christendom when the Church and the State were co-extensive, when

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all Churchmen were citizens and all citizens were Churchmen. Can it be argued that in such circumstances an absolute divorce between Church and State is necessary and practicable? Can it be wrong in such circumstances that a Christian citizen should carry the principles which govern his life into the affairs of State, or that the State should lend its strength and sanction to the Church? Human nature is one. You cannot divide it into separate parts. You cannot say to a citizen, Here you must act as a Christian and a Churchman; and again, Here you must act independently of creed or Church. The same persons are *ex hypothesi* both citizens and Churchmen. The close relation of Church and State, therefore, in such circumstances, is not only legitimate but inevitable.

Dr. Geffcken, the German author, will be admitted to be a distinguished and dispassionate critic upon the relation of Church and State, and this is his language<sup>1</sup> :—

“An attitude of mutual indifference between the State and the religious community can never

<sup>1</sup> *Church and State: their Relations Historically Developed*, vol. i. pp. 8-10.

be desirable, even supposing it to be possible, because both concur on the most important points of contact in human society. Men may try, for the sake of avoiding collision, to reduce to a minimum these points of contact with the law; but the State can never dispense with religion for the moral education of its subjects, since there is no true morality without religion. The example of individuals who, having broken religious belief, still conform to morality, proves nothing to the contrary; for men such as these regulate their conduct, however unconsciously, by the civilisation of the nation to which they belong, and which in turn is saturated with religious elements. The enormous majority will never attain to moral firmness of character by themselves. History proves beyond refutation the vanity of the attempt to supply by philosophy and abstract morality the want of religion. The civilisation of all States alike is based, in the first instance, upon religion; and where the latter is obliterated, as during the later period of the Roman Republic, or in France under Louis XV., there discipline and moral rectitude rapidly decline; the foundations of the

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State itself have become rotten, and give warnings of impending ruin. A purely negative relation between Church and State, such as would completely isolate the latter from religion, would, therefore, if such were possible, be disastrous to the nation.

“On the other hand, the Church cannot entirely renounce her influence over the State, and withdraw herself to the sphere of the mind, inasmuch as religious interests, from their very nature, are involved especially in the most important affairs of life. As a matter of fact, then, a really perfect separation of the State and the religious community, to say nothing of the possibility of the experiment, has never yet been attempted. The demand for it chiefly proceeds, in part from those who regard religion with indifference or hostility, and therefore resent any recognition of it on the part of the State; in part from extreme sections in the Church who see religion enslaved by any relation with the State. The former forget that without religion there is no true morality; the latter, in their blindness to the real facts, expect the return of an ideal Apostolic Church by the

loosening of every tie between religion and the State.

“Every consideration, therefore, points to the regulated union of both powers, precisely because within the spheres of each lie the common elements of social prosperity. Thus we arrive at a third and last alternative, the fundamental proposition of which is that Church and State constitute kindred and yet divergent spheres of action whose functions neither entirely coincide nor divide; that in certain respects they unite while in others they deviate; so that, in the latter case, each of the two powers has to pursue its own course independently, while for the former there is need of organised co-operation. Such a union of liberty and reciprocal activity is eminently suited to civilised Christian States, since it affords scope for the greatest variety, according to circumstances, in the mutual relations of both powers.”

It is much in the same sense that the late Bishop Creighton could say<sup>1</sup> :—

“Church and State are abstractions, but in actual fact they consist largely of the same per-

<sup>1</sup> *Church and State in Oxford House Papers*, p. 42.

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sons, and only express different sides of their activity. When men act together as citizens they are the State; when they act together as Christians they are the Church. Behind both Church and State stands the nation; and Church and State alike are organs of the nation, the one for the arrangement of common life, the other for maintaining the principles on which that life is founded. This is a worthy conception of a nation, and one not lightly to be abandoned."

But if the union or association of Church and State is right in principle where they are co-extensive, it does not become wrong in principle because a certain number of citizens are voluntary dissenters from the national Church. For if the question of a national Church is open in principle, it must be in particular circumstances a question of expediency, and expediency is a matter of degree.

The Nonconformist religious bodies have taken to calling themselves Free Churches. It is one of the foremost provisions in Magna Charta that the Church of England should be free. No doubt it is possible that one Church may enjoy a greater freedom than another; but there is no

Church which is or can be wholly exempt from the control of the Courts of Law, *i.e.* of the State.

Let me illustrate the necessary relation of the Nonconformist Churches to the law of the land by two significant instances.

The first shall be the Dissenters' Chapels Act of 1844. The history of that Act is instructive. It happened that a number of chapels both in England and in Ireland had been built and endowed by the Presbyterians for the purpose of teaching Presbyterian doctrines. The trust-deeds of those chapels limited the use of them to persons holding the orthodox Trinitarian Faith. But in the eighteenth century a good many ministers of the chapels and their congregations with them lapsed into Unitarianism. It became, therefore, necessary to determine whether Unitarians could lawfully retain possession of the chapels held on trust for the promotion of the Trinitarian Creed. The case was tried first by the Court of Chancery, then by the Court of Appeal, and finally in 1842 by the House of Lords. All three courts decided against the Unitarian occupants of the chapels. But the occupants appealed to the Legislature, and the Dissenters' Chapels Act was passed for

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their relief. It did not deal with the particular Presbyterian chapels alone, but it dealt with Nonconformist chapels of all denominations. It enacted "that, so far as no particular religious doctrines or opinions, or mode of regulating worship, shall on the face of the will, deed, or other instrument, declaring the trusts of any meeting-house for the worship of God by persons dissenting as aforesaid, either in express terms, or by reference to some book or other document as containing such doctrines or opinions, or mode of regulating worship, be required to be taught or observed therein, the usage for twenty-five years immediately preceding any suit relating to such meeting-house of the congregation frequenting the same shall be taken as conclusive evidence that such religious doctrines or opinions or mode of worship as have for such period been taught or observed in such meeting-house may properly be taught or observed in such meeting-house; and the right or title of the congregation to hold such meeting-house, together with any burial-ground, Sunday or day school, or minister's house, attached thereto, and any fund for the benefit of such congregation,

of the minister or other officer of such congregation, or of the widow of any such minister, shall not be called in question on account of the doctrines or opinions or mode of worship so taught or observed in such meeting-house."

The effect of this decision was to hand over the chapels which had been built by Presbyterians for Trinitarian teaching to Unitarian hands; and that transference was effected, and could only have been effected, by Parliament.<sup>1</sup> It is evident, then, that the secular authority does and must in certain instances decide matters not only of law but of doctrine. If to-day there were a question, such as might safely be raised by the trustees of the City Temple in London, whether the Rev. R. J. Campbell could properly hold his present office while teaching his present doctrines in religion, it could be decided in the last resort only by a Court of Law or by Parliament.

My second instance is the question which arose so recently as the year 1904 between the Free Church and the United Free Church of Scotland.

<sup>1</sup> On the whole subject of the Dissenters' Chapels Act, see Selborne, *Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment*, part iii. chap. xii. pp. 218-224.

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It arose in the following way. In the year 1900 the majority of the members of the Free Church had effected a union with the United Presbyterian Church; the two bodies had become merged in the United Free Church. But a small minority of the members of the Free Church had opposed the union. They brought an action, or indeed a series of actions, against the trustees of the funds belonging to the Free Church for proposing to transfer those funds to trustees appointed by the United Free Church; and although two decisions were pronounced against them in the Scottish Court of Session, the House of Lords on August 1st reversed these decisions, and declared that the small body, still calling itself the Free Church of Scotland, was entitled to the whole property of the original, undivided Free Church. It is curious to notice the grounds of the appeal which the House of Lords decided in favour of the Free Church and against the United Free Church. Counsel for the appellants argued that the United Free Church had departed from the principles and beliefs of the Free Church of Scotland, first by abandoning the principle of establishment—a principle which the founders

of the Free Church had strongly held—and secondly by modifying, through a "Declaratory Act," which had been passed in 1892, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination as defined in the Westminster Confession of Faith. A secular tribunal then—the House of Lords—was called to determine, and did determine, not only whether the Free Church of Scotland could legally change its attitude towards establishment, but whether it could modify its doctrine, and, if so, whether a particular modification was so serious as to involve the forfeiture of all the property belonging to the Free Church. There is no need to consider the subsequent history of the relation between the Free Church and the United Free Church of Scotland. It is enough to say that a Royal Commission was appointed by Parliament to effect a settlement of the controversy between the Churches. The Royal Commissioners recommended that all the funds and property of the Free Church should be vested in a Commission to be appointed by Act of Parliament, and that the duty of the Commission should be so to allocate these funds and that property as to secure "adequate provision for the due performance of

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the purposes for which the funds were raised and the trusts on which they are held.” These recommendations were practically embodied in the Scottish Churches Act of 1905. By that Act peace was restored. But every step in the controversy and in the settlement of the controversy, including the decision upon doctrine, was taken under the authority of the secular Courts and of Parliament. Every step was an example of the ultimate necessary dependence of all Churches in a civilised community upon the law of the land.<sup>1</sup>

Whether a Church, then, is established or not, it cannot avoid standing in a certain subordinate relation to the State. If any question or dispute even upon doctrine arises between the Church and one of its officers, or between a minister and his congregation, the State alone can in the last resort determine it. There is no distinction then, except in degree, between the dependence of the Church of England and of the Nonconformist bodies upon the law of the land. The supposition of such a difference has probably arisen because

<sup>1</sup> There is a sufficient account of these proceedings in the *Annual Register* for 1904, pp. 235–238; and in the *Annual Register* for 1905, pp. 241–244.

questions within the Church of England are decided by special Ecclesiastical Courts, and questions without the Church by the ordinary Civil Courts ; but both Courts are alike creations of the State, and both derive their authority from the State.

But when once it is made clear that there is nothing essentially wrong in the association between Church and State, nor anything essentially right in the liberation (as it is called) of the Church from the State, the question of a national Church can be argued, as it ought to be argued, on the grounds of practical utility.

And here it becomes necessary to point out how much depends upon the conception of the State. People entertain different views about an establishment of religion, because they entertain different views about the nature or function of the State. How different these views may be will appear if I may put certain striking passages side by side. In the eighth book of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*<sup>1</sup> Hooker expresses himself as follows: “Of every politic society that being true which Aristotle hath, namely, ‘that the

<sup>1</sup> Book viii. pp. 1-4.

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scope thereof is not simply to live, nor the duty so much to provide for life, as for means of living well'; and that even as the soul is the worthier part of man, so human societies are much more to care for that which tendeth properly unto the soul's estate, than for such temporal things as this life doth stand in need of: other proof there needs none to show that, as by all men the kingdom of God is first to be sought for, so in all commonwealths things spiritual ought above temporal to be provided for. And of things spiritual, the chiefest is religion. For this cause persons and things employed peculiarly about the affairs of religion are by an excellency termed spiritual. The heathen themselves had their spiritual laws, causes, and offices, always severed from their temporal; neither did this make two independent estates among them. God by revealing true religion doth make them that receive it His Church. Unto the Jews He so revealed the truth of religion that He gave them in special consideration laws not only for the administration of things spiritual, but also temporal. The Lord Himself appointing both the one and the other in that commonwealth, did not thereby distract

it into several independent communities, but institute several functions of one and the same community."

"Religion," says Burke, "is so far in my opinion from being out of the province or the duty of a Christian magistrate that it is, and ought to be, not only his care but the principal thing in his care; because it is one of the great bonds of human society and its object the supreme good, the ultimate end and object, of man himself. The magistrate, who is a man and charged with the concerns of men, and to whom very specially nothing human is remote and indifferent, has a right and a duty to watch over it with an unceasing vigilance, to protect, promote, and to forward it by every rational, just, and prudent means."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly he says elsewhere: "Our Church Establishment is first, and last, and midst in our minds. For, taking ground on that religious system of which we are now in possession, we continue to act on the early received and uniformly continued sense of mankind. That sense not

<sup>1</sup> "Speech on the Petition of the Unitarians," Burke's Works, vol. x. p. 44 (1826).

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only, like a wise architect, hath built up the august fabric of states, but, like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from profanation and ruin, as a sacred temple, purged from all the impurities of fraud, and violence, and injustice, and tyranny, hath solemnly and for ever consecrated the commonwealth, and all that officiate in it. This consecration is made, that all who administer in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God Himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination ; that their hope should be full of immortality ; that they should not look to the paltry pelf of the moment, nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar, but to a solid, permanent existence, in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Contrast with these words the prevalent conception of the State in the United States of America as Mr. Bryce describes it in his book upon the *American Commonwealth*<sup>2</sup> : “ The State

<sup>1</sup> *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, vol. v. p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iii. p. 472.

is not to them [*i.e.* to Americans] as to Germans or Frenchmen, and even to some English thinkers, an ideal moral power, charged with the duty of forming the characters and guiding the lives of its subjects. It is more like a commercial company, or perhaps a huge municipality created for the management of certain business in which all who reside within its bounds are interested, levying contributions and expending them on this business of common interest, but for the most part leaving the shareholders or burgesses to themselves. That an organisation of this kind should trouble itself, otherwise than as a matter of police, with the opinions or conduct of its members would be as unnatural as for a railway company to inquire how many of the shareholders were total abstainers. Accordingly, it never occurs to the average American that there is any reason why State Churches should exist, and he stands amazed at the warmth of European feeling on the matter."

It is evident that neither of these theories of the State can be realised without some qualification.

Hooker's or Burke's theory seems to postulate what is still the law in England—viz. the co-extensiveness of Church and State, or the identity

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of Churchmen and citizens. It loses something of its conclusiveness or impressiveness in such proportion as the Church becomes a narrower body than the State. On the other hand, Mr. Bryce has no sooner defined the American conception of the State than he is bound to admit that in the United States as elsewhere a complete divorce between the State and religion proves to be an impossibility. To quote his own words, "The National government and the State governments do give to Christianity a species of recognition inconsistent with the view that civil government should be absolutely neutral in religious matters." And again, "Christianity is in fact understood to be, though not the legally established religion, yet the national religion."

It would seem, then, that while the State cannot treat the religion of its citizens with indifference, yet where the conception of the State is higher it will accentuate, and where that conception is lower it will minimise, the recognition officially granted to religion and to the Church. The modern State tends through its Government to take a wider and loftier view of its own proper functions. More and more it concerns itself not

with the mere physical welfare of the citizens, but with their life, their housing, the conditions under which they labour, their education, their deliverance from temptations to drink or to other forms of vice, and the general elevation of their lives in culture and morality. The State, in fact, as the late Dean Church<sup>1</sup> has wisely observed, tends to usurp the offices which were once claimed by the Church. But as the State seeks to exercise a moralising influence upon its citizens, as it aims at making them not only healthier and happier, but better, wiser, and purer men and women, so if religion is, as it is, the most potent of all motives to morality, the severance between the State and religion becomes unnatural, and the sympathy or association of the State with religion, whatever particular form it may assume, becomes natural, and may in the end prove to be necessary.

<sup>1</sup> *The Gifts of Civilisation.* Sermon iv.: "Civilisation and Religion."

## LECTURE II

### THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN A NATIONAL CHURCH IN THE PRE- SENT DAY

IN my first lecture I laid before you some few general considerations upon the existence of an established and endowed national Church. I tried to argue that such a national Church is neither intrinsically right nor intrinsically wrong; it must be either approved or disallowed upon a balance of expediency and utility. Wherever an established Church exists, there is a certain gain and a certain loss; wherever no such Church exists, there is also a certain gain and a certain loss—it is all a question of degree. The most ardent Liberationist would, I think, admit that a national Church, established and endowed, does afford a guarantee, which, if there were not such a Church, would be wanting, for the continuity of religious worship and practice in all parts and among all classes of the land.

On the other hand a Churchman, however strongly convinced a supporter of establishment he may be, would probably allow that the formal association of the Church with the State does or may involve a certain loss of independence to the Church.

I do not indeed altogether like the title of "Free Churches" which the religious bodies outside the established Church have of late somewhat arrogated to themselves. For to speak of them as the Free Churches is to assume that freedom is not to be found except in them. It is to be guilty of the mistake into which Free-thinkers fall, when they assume that nobody can claim to think freely, unless he thinks as they do. All Churches are more or less free, and all are more or less restrained by the law of the land; their freedom may be greater or less, but no one of them is altogether free. There may be a tyranny, too, of wealth or of power as well as of the State.

If indeed the association of Church and State were everywhere wrong, and a complete severance of the Church from the State were anywhere possible, the question of a national Church might be said to be ended, or more accurately not to

arise at all. But the idea that Church and State can co-exist in the same country without any mutual relation between them is an impossibility. The idea that such a relation between them is necessarily opposed to the law of Christianity is a contradiction of all Christian history. Among all Christian nations from the era of Constantine onwards the Church has stood in some sort of relation to the State. Whether the alliance of the Church with the State has tended to the good of the Church or not is an open question. Nonconformists, or most of them, think that it secularises the Church ; Churchmen, or most of them, think that it consecrates the State. But it inflicts no hardship upon the conscience of Nonconformists, unless they are compelled or induced to make themselves parties to the alliance. If they stand outside the alliance between the Church and the State, it does not affect them, at least religiously. It may be an injustice, and if so, they may try to redress it; but it is not a sacrilege, and they are not bound to resist it. Presumably Churchmen know what is best for the Church, as Nonconformists know what is best for Nonconformity.

It is the business of Nonconformists to make Nonconformity better—it is no business of theirs to make the Church better. The highest welfare of the community as a whole will be attained if both Churchmen and Nonconformists are permitted to organise their religion in the way which they severally regard as most closely approximating to the will of Jesus Christ.

That there is anything essentially wrong in the establishment of a national Church or in the association of a Church with the State, may be said to be an afterthought of Nonconformity. It was no part of the principles advocated by the founders and leaders of the great Nonconformist bodies. It was not a conviction entertained by such persons as Cromwell, or Wesley, or Chalmers.

It has sometimes occurred to me to wonder whether the Liberationists of to-day, when they insist upon the complete severance between the Church and the State as a Christian duty, have sufficiently regarded the temper and the language of the men who were protagonists in the great struggle for liberty of conscience and worship. These distinguished men aspired at times to change the character of the national Church, and

at other times to worship God in peace according to their own consciences outside the national Church; but they looked upon the national acknowledgment of religion as entirely consistent with the ideal both of the State and of the Church.

It is scarcely necessary to quote Cromwell's words. His whole policy was based upon the national profession of a particular religious and ecclesiastical faith. But the following is the language addressed by him to his first Parliament—the Parliament which met, as he says, "on the greatest occasion that" in his opinion "England ever saw," and that "had upon its shoulders the interests of three great Nations with the territories belonging to them," and, as he believed he might say "without any hyperbole, the interests of all the Christian people in the world." After speaking of the difference between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, he adds, "This Government hath, 'farther,' endeavoured to put a stop to that heady way . . . of every man making himself a Minister and Preacher. It hath endeavoured to settle a method for the approving and sanctioning of men of piety and ability to discharge that work. And I think I

may say it hath committed the business to the trust of Persons, both of the Presbyterian and Independent judgments, of as known ability, piety, and integrity, as any, I believe, this Nation hath. And I believe also that, in that care they have taken, they have laboured to approve themselves to Christ, to the Nation and to their own consciences. And indeed I think, if there be anything of quarrel against them—though I am not here to justify the proceedings of any—it is that they, ‘in fact,’ go upon such a character as the Scripture warrants: To put men into that great Employment, and to approve men for it, who are men that have ‘received gifts from Him that ascended up on high, and gave gifts’ for the work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

In a later speech addressed to the same Parliament he expresses himself as follows:—

“‘Again’, is not Liberty of Conscience in Religion a Fundamental? So long as there is Liberty of Conscience for the Supreme Magistrate to exercise his Conscience in erecting what Form of Church-

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, part viii. speech ii.

government he is satisfied he should set up, why should he not give the like liberty to others? Liberty of Conscience is a natural right, and he that would have it, ought to give it; having 'himself' liberty to settle what he likes for the Public. Indeed that hath been one of the vanities of our Contest. Every Sect saith: 'Oh, give me liberty!' But give it him, and to his power he will not yield it to anybody else. Where is our ingenuousness? 'Liberty of Conscience'—truly that is a thing ought to be very reciprocal! The Magistrate hath his supremacy; he may settle Religion, 'that is, Church-government,' according to his conscience. And 'as for the People,' I may say it to you, I can say it: All the money of this Nation would not have tempted men to fight upon such an account as they have here been engaged in, if they had not had hopes of Liberty 'of Conscience' better than Episcopacy granted them, or than would have been afforded by a Scots Presbytery, or an English either, if it had made such steps, and been as sharp and rigid, as it threatened when first set up."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, part viii. speech iii.

Such language as this seems strangely anachronistic, if it is considered in reference to the facts of modern life; but it is an ample proof that the Protector looked upon the care of religion as being not only a possibility but an absolute duty of the State.

If I proceed to quote some passages of John Wesley's writings, there is in my mind no thought of using them as arguments against the present constitution of the Wesleyan Methodist Church or Churches. All that I am concerned to do is to show that he saw no evil, or at least that he saw more good than evil, in the association between Church and State.

“Upon the whole,” he says in one passage, “we agree that Christ is the only ‘supreme Judge and Lawgiver in the Church’; I may add, and in the world; for ‘there is no power,’ no secular power, ‘but of God,’ of God who ‘was manifested in the flesh,’ who ‘is over all, blessed for ever.’ But we do not at all agree in the inference which you would draw therefrom, namely, that there is no subordinate judge or lawgiver in the world. Yea, there is, both in the one and in the other. And in obeying these subor-

dinate powers, we do not as you aver renounce the Supreme ; no, but we obey them for His sake.”<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere he writes to another correspondent : “ Having had an opportunity of seeing several of the Churches abroad, and having deeply considered the several sorts of dissenters at home, I am fully convinced that our own Church, with all her blemishes, is nearer the scriptural plan than any other in Europe.”<sup>2</sup>

John Wesley’s *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*, written in 1758, are well known. It is not, I think, so well known that his brother, Charles Wesley, appended to them the following words of approval : “ I think myself bound in duty to add my testimony to my brother’s. His twelve reasons against our ever separating from the Church of England are mine also. I subscribe to them with all my heart.”<sup>3</sup>

My last quotation from John Wesley shall be part of the sermon which he preached on Monday,

<sup>1</sup> *Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. x. p. 504 (1872). Letter to the Rev. Mr. Toogood, Jan. 10, 1758.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xiii. p. 146. Letter to Sir Harry Trelawney.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xiii. pp. 225-232.

April 21, 1777, "on laying the foundation of the new Chapel near the City Road, London." It runs thus: "The Methodists (so termed) know their calling. They weighed the matter at first, and upon mature deliberation determined to continue in the Church. Since that time they have not wanted temptations of every kind to alter their resolution. They have heard abundance said upon the subject, perhaps all that can be said. They have read the writings of the most eminent pleaders for separation, both in the last and present century. They have spent several days in a General Conference upon this very question, 'Is it *expedient* (supposing, not granting, that it is *lawful*) to separate from the Established Church?' But still they see no sufficient cause to depart from their first resolution. So that their fixed purpose is, let the clergy or laity use them well or ill, by the grace of God to endure all things, to hold on their even course, and to continue in the Church, maugre men or devils, unless God permits them to be thrust out."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. vii. p. 428, sermon cxxxii.

It is not my purpose to ask whether the Methodists were eventually "thrust out" of the Church, or whether their severance from the Church was morally justifiable. I am merely arguing that John Wesley did not disallow, but expressly approved, the principle of an Established Church, and that he approved it at a time when it had been challenged by other ecclesiastical writers and thinkers.

My third witness is Dr. Chalmers. His is a name peculiarly important in the history of Church and State, because he was a leader of the great disruption which constituted the Free Church of Scotland in 1843. Dr. Chalmers wrote a celebrated treatise on *Church and College Establishments*. It is divided into two parts; the first part dealing with "The Use and Abuse of Literary and Ecclesiastical Endowments"; the second part, which consists of lectures delivered in London between April 25 and May 12, 1838, dealing with "'The Establishment and Extension of National Churches.'" It is from the second part that I take the following passage: "There is nothing in the doctrine of the Spirit to reduce, but everything to enhance, the im-

portance of the Gospel being preached—and so, therefore, the importance of the question, ‘What is best to be done that we might secure its being preached to every creature?’ If there is one economy, under which there is every likelihood that, with all our strenuousness and care, we shall fall short of more than half the population; and another economy, by which it may be made sure that the calls and lessons of Christianity shall be brought to every door—this, all other circumstances being equal, forms in itself a strong ground for our preference of the latter over the former. It is our purpose to demonstrate that this invaluable property of a full and universal diffusion belongs only to a National Establishment; and to make it palpable, by all the lights of history and human nature, that it never is, and never can be, realised either by the Voluntary System or by what has been termed the System of Free Trade in Christianity.”<sup>1</sup>

In another passage Dr. Chalmers directly meets the argument that, where differences of religious opinion exist, a national establishment of re-

<sup>1</sup> *Chalmers' Works*, vol. xvii. On “The Establishment and Extension of National Churches,” lecture i. p. 194.

ligion becomes impossible or illegitimate. "The moral well-being of a nation," he says, "is not to stand at abeyance, till an adjustment shall have been made among controversies not yet determined and perhaps indeterminable. The Government does right in resolving on a territorial establishment, and in selecting the ministers of one denomination to work it. Should it, because of this, incur the complaint of not doing equal justice to all the sectaries, it can allege in its defence the far higher consideration of doing equal justice to all the families of all the population, by so adapting the Church which it pays and takes into its service—by so adapting it to the country that it may reach all and be comprehensive of all. It is neither for the exaltation of one sect, nor for the infliction of a stigma on all the rest, that Government confines its overtures to one only. It is because in this way the business of a general Christian education is most thoroughly done and most fully overtaken. The Government is not to be diverted from this object, of highest and most catholic policy, by the differences which have broken out in the Christian world."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Chalmers' Works*, vol. xvii., lecture vii. p. 344.

It is abundantly clear that Dr. Chalmers regarded an established and endowed national Church as being the only means of insuring the diffusion of religious teaching throughout the length and breadth of the land. Leader though he was of the Free Church, he always regretted the necessity of severance from the national Church of Scotland; he always valued and advocated the principle of national Churches. It is indeed a curious paradox that one of the arguments advanced in 1904 against the title of the United Free Church to the property of the original Free Church was the departure of these Free Churchmen who had associated themselves with the United Presbyterian Church to constitute the United Free Church from the original faith of Free Churchmen in a national establishment of religion.

But there is, I think, the strongest evidence as to the feeling of the early Nonconformists about a national establishment of religion in the events which followed the year 1662. Nonconformity, as a force separate from and opposed to the Church of England, may be said to date from St. Bartholomew's Day in that year. There was pub-

lished some time afterwards a book called *The Nonconformists' Memorial*, "being an Account of the Lives, Sufferings, and Printed Works of the two thousand ministers ejected from the Church of England chiefly, by the Act of Uniformity." It was drawn from the writings of so strong a Nonconformist as Calamy. In the fifth section of the introduction to that book the reasons for the severance of the ejected ministers from the Church of England are specified; they are discussed at considerable length; but the wrongfulness of association between Church and State finds no place among them. I do not deny that in the writings of some few ardent sectaries, such as Robert Brown and George Fox, it is possible to discover passages of strong declamation against the interference of any secular authority with the rights and responsibilities of the individual soul. But it has, I think, been amply proved that Liberationism, or the necessary complete severance between Church and State, is not an original or vital principle of Nonconformity, and that is the sole point for which I wish at present to contend.

Liberationism is, I have said, an afterthought

of Nonconformity. It is indeed a rather late afterthought. For the history of the *Regium Donum*, whether in England or in Ireland, shows that Nonconformists down to a quite recent date felt no scruple about receiving a grant of money from the State. The English *Regium Donum*, which was instituted by Sir Robert Walpole in 1722, was an annual payment made by the State for the support of Nonconformist ministers in necessitous pecuniary circumstances and of their widows and children. It was, as Lord Selborne has remarked,<sup>1</sup> accepted and approved by such stalwart Nonconformists as Calamy, Doddridge, Watts, and Robert Hall. Between the years 1722, when it originated, and 1852, when it came to an end, it amounted in all to a sum between £200,000 and £250,000. It was eventually surrendered by the Nonconformists, not indeed without some difference of opinion among them, because the attack upon the endowments of the Church would have been logically impossible, had the Liberationists themselves continued to be recipients of an annual bounty from the State. So it was that, in July 1845, the

<sup>1</sup> *Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment*, p. 213.

Executive Committee of the Liberationist Society, or, as it was then called, the Anti-State Church Association, in an address presented to the "distributors and recipients" of the bounty, could urge upon them the logical duty of self-sacrifice in the following words: "What weight can be due to our remonstrances against ecclesiastical exactions, so long as the body to which we in common belong can be charged with sharing any division of the spoil?"<sup>1</sup> All that can be said is, that the Nonconformist conscience in 1852 had become more sensitive than it was for more than a century after 1722.

The *Regium Donum* granted as an annual bounty by the State to the support of the Presbyterian "form of religious worship and instruction" in Ireland began even earlier and continued even later than the *Regium Donum* in England. It lasted from 1690 to 1870. Lord Selborne calculates that the total amount of the Irish *Regium Donum* must have been something like £2,000,000.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Selborne (p. 214) quotes these words from *The Case for Disestablishment*, p. 199. They seem to have been omitted or modified in later editions.

When the Act for disestablishing and disendowing the Irish Church was passed in 1869, all the annual grants of the State for religious purposes came to an end; but a certain part of the funds belonging to the disestablished Church was appropriated by that Act for the purposes of—

1. Paying annuities to Presbyterian ministers in consideration of their vested interests.
2. Commuting these annuities into capital sums as the basis of a sustentation fund for the Presbyterian ministry, with a bonus of 12 per cent. if more than three-fourths of the ministers accepted commutation.
3. Paying a capital sum, as compensation for the loss of grants to ministers' widows, to the Ministers' Widows Fund Association.

These proceedings took place, and these grants of money were made, down to 1870, without a word of conscientious protest from the Nonconformists.

It would seem indeed not to be certain that the Nonconformists, and even the English Nonconformists, are at the present time entirely consistent in their attitude towards the State. They

reject the principle of ecclesiastical endowments, or of pecuniary contributions made by the State for religious purposes, in England; but they do not always reject them elsewhere. In India, for example, Wesleyan ministers receive as acting-chaplains payments from the Government; and so far were they, when I was in India, from feeling these payments to be iniquitous, that they were willing to accept, and even eager to demand, an increase in the number and the amount of the sums so paid to them.

It is of course open to the Nonconformists to maintain that they have gradually learnt, or have gradually learnt to practise, the lesson of emancipation from the trammels and the rewards of the State. It is not my wish to blame them, if the process of learning has been slow, and is still incomplete. My only contention is, that the absolute severing of religion from the State is not and has not been a principle essentially inherent in Nonconformity.

It has indeed often been stated, and notably by Mr. Gladstone in his address to the electors of Midlothian in September 1885, that the spirit of the age tends towards the complete severance

between the activities of the Church and of the State. "We can hardly be surprised," wrote Mr. Gladstone, "if those who observe that a current, almost throughout the civilised world, slowly sets in this direction should desire or fear that among ourselves too it may be found to operate." It would perhaps be true to say that the current of which Mr. Gladstone speaks seems to make for the transference of particular functions from the Church to the State rather than for the complete severance between the Church and the State. But that such a current exists in some countries is, I think, undeniable. It reveals itself by many instances in many ways. It has helped to produce a new conception both of the Church and of the State. Nor can any candid observer well doubt that the recent severance between Church and State in France — a severance effected, as it seems, with a *minimum* of political and administrative dislocation — must lead people in England to regard such a severance as something which is possible and even easy, if it is held to be desirable in itself.

Yet, unless I misread the signs of the times, the current of opinion favourable to disestablish-

ment is in Great Britain of less force and volume than it was. The agitation for disendowing and disestablishing the Church of Scotland has admittedly lost ground of late years, owing to various personal and social causes, and not least to the Scottish Churches Act of 1905. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his speech at the recent Swansea Church Congress observed that it was difficult to get up a meeting in favour of disestablishment in Scotland to-day. In England too the spirit of Collectivism, or in its extreme form of Socialism, as it looks more and more to the State for the amelioration and the elevation of society, cannot but regard religion as a force to be utilised rather than discarded in the promotion of social improvements. The Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Party do not feel as the Nonconformists feel about the Church ; they may wish to use the Church for their own purposes rather than for hers ; but the object which they have at heart, whether they pursue it wisely or unwisely, is social reform, and in seeking that object the Church can go some way hand in hand with them, or at least can offer them a sympathetic, if discriminating, support.

The truth is that the question of a national religious establishment is much like the question of a national religious educational system. Where the citizens of a country differ in religious tenets, the obvious course, it may be said, is to educate children in the subjects about which their parents all agree, and to omit the subjects about which they disagree. This is the principle of secular education, and it is a principle which is honestly and logically advocated. But in human life it is not always the path of least resistance which is the path of highest wisdom. The citizens of Great Britain have generally held, and the Nonconformists have been foremost in holding, that the religious education of the young is too important a national interest to be wholly neglected by the State. The welfare of the State depends upon the God-fearing character of its citizens, who are the children of to-day but will be the men and women of to-morrow. Therefore the State cannot leave the teaching of religion to chance, or to individual taste, or to the rivalry of conflicting denominations; but the State must itself insure that all children shall receive some religious education, unless their parents expressly

withdraw them from receiving it. Similarly it is possible to argue that the supreme interest of the State lies in religion, because religion is of all motives the most powerful for producing good citizens; the State cannot therefore forgo the duty of taking such measures as will afford the opportunity of religious teaching and religious worship to all citizens in all parts of the country.

The question then of a national religious establishment is not simple. There is much to be said for it, and much perhaps against it. On the one hand such an establishment insures the continuity and the universality of religious teaching in the land, but it insures them at the cost of differentiating one Church as a religious body from all others. On the other hand the absence of an establishment insures the equality of all Churches and denominations in relation to the State; but the equality is insured at the cost of leaving the provision of religious teaching and worship to voluntary agencies, which may or may not be able to cope with the universal need and demand.

Let me repeat that I wish to look upon the

existence of a national Church wholly and solely in the light of the question, What is best for the religious interests of the people? It does not present itself to me as being primarily, although it may have become historically, a question between the Church and Nonconformity. The late Archbishop Benson once remarked that he would much rather live under a Methodist established Church than under no established Church at all. His words express the spirit of all Christian thinkers who care more for religion and for Christianity than for the predominance or the privilege of any one religious body.

With all my heart I repudiate the language of those few narrow bigoted Churchmen who speak of Nonconformity as if it were a thing essentially evil, a poison needing to be driven out of the ecclesiastical system, a principle of decadence and corruption within the Church of Jesus Christ. The Church must never allow herself to deny or forget that she has been, through her own faults and failings, largely responsible for the origin of Nonconformity in its various branches. Still less must she deny or forget that the Nonconformists, except indeed the Unitarians, believe all or nearly

all the Articles which she herself regards as vital to Christianity. The history of Nonconformity is the history of a long protest for the rights of the individual conscience; there have been few nobler histories in the world; and if Nonconformity has in recent days somewhat changed its spirit, if it has tended to become more political and possibly less spiritual, if it is less morally valuable than once it was as a force in the national life, the reason is only that it has achieved its primary object — liberty of conscience and of worship is assured; and the zeal of Nonconformity has in consequence been more or less diverted from its original to secondary and subordinate ends. But nothing is more surprising than that certain Churchmen, while inveighing against the political spirit of Nonconformity, should fail to see how they themselves, if they aim at political ends by political means, are sure to become spiritually demoralised by the same spirit of politics.

Assuming it then to have been shown that the complete severance between Church and State is and must always be an impossibility, and that such severance was no original principle of Non-

conformity, I hold that the question of a national religious establishment in England resolves itself into two other questions, viz.: Whether the Church, as at present related to the State, is beneficent and not injurious to the people of England; and, How far the beneficence of the Church would be affected for good or for evil by disestablishment.

If there is greater national good than evil in the establishment of religion, then the Church ought to remain as an establishment; if the evil is greater than the good, then the Church ought to be disestablished.

It is indeed a more serious matter to disestablish and disendow an ancient Church than to refrain from establishing and endowing a new Church. So far, but so far only, the example of the Colonies is no necessary precedent for Great Britain. It must, I think, be frankly admitted that the Colonies of the British Empire and the United States of America, as in them no established and endowed Church exists, afford an irrefutable argument for the possibility of organising national life upon a Christian basis without an ecclesiastical establishment. But neither in the

Colonies nor in the United States was there ever a national Church. There was never a time when their citizens were homogeneous in religion. There are no historical links uniting the Government in the Colonies or in the United States to a particular Church. It is a point which may be fairly raised whether the absence of an established Church in the United States, like the absence of an aristocracy, has not in some sense prejudicially affected the national life, *e.g.* by concentrating attention upon wealth, as the supreme and supremely desirable factor in personal and civic well-being. It is clear, too, that the effects of organising national life without an established Church will naturally be less visible in the small area of the Colonies than in the United States or in Great Britain itself; and my experience of travel over the Empire leads me to think that the existence of a national Church at home exercises some salutary influence upon the respect paid to the Church and to religion throughout the Empire.

Still I cannot hold that the wounds which the policy of disestablishment and disendowment, if it were carried out in England, would inflict

not only upon the Church but upon the State constitute a sufficient reason for refusing to do what is right and just, as soon as it is proved to be right and just. My contention is that a national religious establishment is in itself neither right nor wrong. It may be right in one country and wrong in another. It may have been wrong in Ireland, yet it may be right in Spain; and in France it may have been right and may have come to be wrong. There is neither a divine right nor a secular wrong in the existence of a national Church. Where the citizens of a nation are all agreed in religion, as in the Europe of the Middle Ages, the association of the Church with the State seems to be inevitable. Where a Church is the Church of a small minority, as the Church of Ireland was, its severance from the State soon or late seems to be equally inevitable. There is, as I have said, a balance of arguments on the one side and on the other; and as the balance inclines one way or the other, after due regard to considerations of the past as well as of the present, it is the duty of statesmen to act.

When, then, are the conditions under which a

national Church established and endowed may be reasonably maintained in such a country as England? Upon this point men will judge differently according to their dispositions and prepossessions. I can only offer you my own opinion. So far as I am able to judge, the justification of a national established and endowed Church requires two essential conditions, *viz.* :—

1. That the Church should be numerically and influentially far stronger than any other religious body in the nation; I think as a general rule that the Church should embrace half the nation within her pale.
2. That the Church should be broadly sympathetic with the temper and current of the national religious life.

It is conceivable that the State, from a sense of the value attaching to religious influences, should elect one religious body for association with itself, even at the cost of some apparent particularism or favouritism. But such a body can scarcely be conceived as comprising only a small minority of the population; it will necessarily be the body of the largest numerical

importance. The choice of this one body may be justified on the ground that it is the body which comes nearest to being a Church co-extensive with the nation. But to choose any other body would be to run the risk of seeming to impose the religious belief of the minority upon the majority of the nation.

It is not my wish, in laying down this principle, to prejudge the fortune of the Church in Wales. Whether the Church in Wales is numerically larger than any other religious body may be open to argument. It is certainly not so large as a combination of the two or three chief religious bodies in Wales; it certainly does not include half the population of Wales. The ground upon which the establishment in Wales is generally defended is not that the Church in Wales is the Church of the majority of the population, but that Wales is not, in the sense in which Ireland is, a separate country. Nor is it possible for me to conceal my opinion that a matter so important as the existence of an established and endowed national Church in England and Wales, especially a Church which has lasted for many centuries, ought not to be

decided by piecemeal legislation ; rather should it be submitted as a separate issue affecting the nation as a whole to the nation as a whole. But that a national Church must be the Church of the nation, at least in the sense of containing a larger number of citizens than any other religious body within her pale, is a proposition which can scarcely be disputed. No smaller Church can claim to be called national. In so saying, I do not forget the possibility of a sudden wave of religious passion, as in England under the Commonwealth, or of irreligious passion, as in France at the Revolution, sweeping over a country. Then the religious temper of the nation at a particular epoch may not be its definite or permanent temper ; for, as Bishop Butler once said to his chaplain, “Why should not nations, like individuals, go mad ?” Perhaps one of the main advantages belonging to an established and endowed Church is that such a Church, if submerged for a time by a storm of popular feeling, will soon lift its head again above the waves. But such a Church, whatever may be its transient experiences, must ultimately reflect the permanent religious conviction

of the majority, or at least of the dominant part, of the nation.

If any one asks how the numerical proportion of various religious bodies in a State can be ascertained, the answer is that there is no other satisfactory way of obtaining it than a census organised by the Government. It is difficult, for me at least, to sympathise with the objection so often urged by Nonconformists against such a census. Even if it were true that a number of persons not conscientiously attached to any religious body would be tempted to register themselves as being members of the Church of England, that is itself a fact worth knowing, and the weight attaching to it may easily be discounted. There can be no good reason why a religious census, which is held in nearly all civilised countries, and among them in Ireland and the Colonies, should not be held in Great Britain. Statistics relating to the number of seats provided in churches and chapels or to the attendance of worshippers in the churches and chapels on a particular Sunday are comparatively valueless; for the accommodation of seats may as easily rise above, as it may fall

below, the actual need, and the haphazard enumeration made by self-appointed observers not only fails to take account of the difference in the number of the services which different churches hold on the same Sunday, but it affords no guarantee against prejudice or carelessness. The only way of learning what a man's religious creed is, or whether he possesses any creed at all, is to ask him.

But if numerical preponderance is one condition essential to an established and endowed Church, it is not, I think, the only or the chief condition. A Church cannot be treated as national unless it is sympathetic with the general religious feeling and temper of the nation. Such a Church lives in the presence of other religious bodies, and if it is national the members of those other bodies must regard it not as a foe but as a friend; there cannot be at the present time a permanently established and endowed national Church which is distrusted by a great part of the nation.

The Church of England, indeed, does not stand in contrast with any other Church or religious body of equal or approximately equal

numerical strength. The religious bodies which live around the Church of England are doctrinally separated among themselves; and although the divergences of doctrine are to some extent merged in common action, owing in part perhaps to hostility against the Church of England, but far more to the growing prepossession for organic unity, yet these differences remain, and might at any time revive, if the Church of England, as a national Church, were no longer set over against Nonconformity. The Roman Catholics in England stand aloof not only from other Nonconformist bodies, but for the most part from the attack of the other Nonconformist bodies on the Church. Nor is it easy to understand how the Baptists, if they remain true to their distinctive historical tenet, can associate themselves with other religious bodies which practise infant baptism. Whatever may be the future of Nonconformity, and whether the Free Churches, as they call themselves, come closer together or gradually fly apart, the Church of England is now, and will probably remain, the predominant religious community in the land.

But if the Church is the Church of a clear majority of the nation, or if the Church is not only far stronger than any other religious body taken by itself, but is possibly stronger than all the other religious bodies taken together, it may fairly be said that the Church occupies a position of undisputed pre-eminence, and nobody doubts that, if there is a national Church at all, that Church must be the present Church of England.

The predominance of the national Church over other religious bodies in the nation, and the sympathy of the national Church with those bodies in the general spirit of their religious life, are the conditions under which alone a national establishment and endowment of religion is possible at the present time.

It is difficult indeed to think of a national Church as a Church distrusted and disliked by a great part of the nation. Such a Church cannot be, and—let me say frankly—ought not to be, the Church of the nation. It is not inconsistent with the maintenance of a national Church that many citizens of the nation should on personal or historical grounds prefer the services and ministrations

tions which are found elsewhere than within the sanctuaries of the Church. But even these citizens must generally regard the national Church with friendly feelings. They must welcome, if not regularly, yet from time to time, the spiritual offices of the clergy. They must be willing to co-operate with the clergy and laity of the Church in matters of public utility and beneficence. They must feel the Church to be a pillar of religion, and not an offence against religious equality. It will probably not be denied that this was for a long time, and in some degree still is, the attitude of religious Nonconformists towards the Church. Sometimes they bring their children to the Church for Holy Baptism ; sometimes they are married, or their children are married, in her sanctuaries ; it is often by her clergy that they are laid to rest in the grave. It is still possible to appeal to the affection and veneration of many Nonconformists for the Church of their fathers.

But the sympathy with the Church shown by Nonconformists, and especially by those Nonconformists in whom the religious spirit has not been vitiated by politics, must be reciprocated by the Church and by the clergy. They must make

the least, and not the most, of the differences between Churchmen and Nonconformists. If there are nine points upon which Churchmen and Nonconformists agree, against one point of difference between them, they must not insist upon the one point as a reason for hostility, while they see in the nine points no reason for amity. They must show all courtesy to Nonconformist ministers; they must treat, as they often do treat, their parishioners who are Nonconformists with the same kindness and generosity as those who are Churchmen and Churchwomen. They must avoid all offensive language and conduct towards Nonconformity. In a word, they must look upon Nonconformists not as aliens and heretics, but as fellow-Christians. There is reason to fear that since the era of the Oxford Movement the Church of England has lost something of her national character, and has become more and more the Church of a sect. She has ceased to be national in exact proportion as she has accentuated the distinction between herself and Nonconformity. For the Church of the nation must be national; she must care, not for part of the nation only, but for the nation as a whole. As

a Church becomes sectarian, she loses her influence upon the national life. It is too much the fashion in certain quarters to assume that the office of a Church is to enunciate certain laws, to impose them upon her own members, and to treat as outcasts all persons who do not accept and obey them. No conduct can be more widely removed from the spirit of Him who said to His disciples of the man casting out devils in another name than His "Forbid him not." It is only too easy to see on the continent of Europe the example of a Church strong in orthodoxy, in ecclesiastical organisation, and in historical dignity, yet impotent to exercise any serious control over the national life. If a Church lives out of sympathy with the nation, then her voice may be loud and strong, but it falls upon deaf ears. For as in private so in national life it is to a friend and not to a stranger that men turn in hours of difficulty and distress; and the Church can profoundly affect the spirit of the nation only by keeping herself in close and constant touch with the national life.

The temper of exclusion or isolation, the temper of those who call themselves good Churchmen and

forget to ask if they are good Christians, of those who widen the gulf between the Church and other religious bodies in the land, and who treat Nonconformists as the Church of Rome in her narrow arrogance treats them—that is a temper incompatible with the existence of a national Church. How different was the mood of a Hooker or an Andrewes! To broaden Churchmanship, to make it more tolerant and more sympathetic, so long as it remains true to cardinal principles, is to prolong the days of the Church not only as an establishment but as a powerful and prevalent force in the national life. The great Churchmen of the past realised not in theory only but in practice that the Church of the nation might be at once tenacious of her own distinctive principles and yet sympathetic with the religious life of the nation at large. So too it has been well said by a recent writer that “The best and wisest friends of the Church, if they wish to continue the system of a national Church, will do their utmost not to break but to strengthen the many ties that unite her with the general body of English citizens.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Elliot, *The State and the Church*, p. ix.

The Church Defence Society has done and is doing admirable work, in so far as it brings out forgotten or neglected facts respecting the nature and the history of the Church. Its publications, its lectures, and its meetings are, as they deserve to be, widely valued. The only drawback to them is that they evoke rival publications or lectures and antagonistic meetings. But the true defence of the Church of England lies in making the Church so deeply loved by the people of England, and in rendering her services to the nation so great, so tangible, and so precious, that English men and English women will shrink from the mere thought of doing her an injury.

There is an ideal of the Church which ever looms before my eyes. I see her not as an isolated religious body domineering over others, still less disdaining intercourse or sympathy with others. I see her as the Mother Church of my country, firmly based on the principle of historical continuity and never flinching from the assertion of her own rights and beliefs, but stretching out her hands to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and so drawing them, surely if slowly,

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into a full communion with herself. Let the Church but attain or aspire to this ideal, and it may be that in the hour of testing the nation will say of her, even as an establishment, “Destroy her not, for a blessing is in her.”

## LECTURE III

### THE PROBABLE CONSEQUENCES OF DISESTABLISHING AND DISENDOWING THE NATIONAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND

LET me summarise in two or three sentences the main points of my preceding lectures upon the relation of Church and State in England. It has been argued that the existence of a national Church established and endowed is neither intrinsically just nor intrinsically unjust, neither absolutely right nor absolutely wrong. It has been argued that the essential wrongfulness of such a Church was not an original or essential principle of Nonconformity. It has been argued, too, that whether a particular Church is established and endowed or not, the complete severance between the State and religion is an impossibility. It follows that there are arguments in favour of, as well as arguments against, the establishment and endowment of a national Church; and that the duty of a statesman or political

thinker is in this case, as in many others, to strike the balance of gain and loss. Finally it has been argued that the maintenance of an established and endowed national Church can only be justified where that Church is admittedly the predominant religious body in the nation, and is also sympathetic with the religious sentiment and tendency of the nation at large.

But the question of the established Church of England will probably be decided, as I said in my first lecture, not by theoretical or even by historical considerations, but by considerations of a practical kind. In a word the nation, when it is called to pronounce judgment for or against the maintenance of a national Church, will ask itself not so much, Ought there to be or not to be a national establishment of religion? nor, Is the national establishment deeply rooted in history? but, What are the practical effects of a religious establishment? How far and in what way does it profit the nation? and, What will be the loss to the nation if the national Church ceases to exist?

There is room, then, for inquiring, and it is my purpose in the present lecture to inquire, what

would be the probable consequences of disestablishing and disendowing the Church of England. These consequences I shall try to estimate, not in the spirit of political or ecclesiastical party, but simply with regard to the spiritual interests of the nation. What is best for religion? what is best for the religious life of the people?—that is the question which it is desirable to keep in view. So far as I succeed in confining myself to this one question, I shall be on common ground with the advocates of Liberationism; for at the outset of *The Case for Disestablishment*<sup>1</sup> it is stated that the Liberation Society, or the Anti-State Church Association, as it was first called, was “founded by earnest-minded Christian men, who, while deeply sensible of the injustice of religious establishments and of the social and political evils to which they give rise, were yet chiefly influenced by religious considerations.” In fact the founders of the Anti-State Church Association, in a resolution passed at the conference when it was founded, expressed themselves as “constrained” in their antagonism to “State-establishments of religion” by “a deep

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, p. 2.

sense of obligation to Jesus Christ, the sole head of the Church."

It is possible that the good and the evil consequences of disestablishment, the hopes of its advocates and the fears of its opponents, will alike prove to be exaggerated. But they deserve to be honestly faced ; and the best way—perhaps the only true way—of facing them is, as it seems to me, to ask what have been the consequences of disestablishing a national Church in the countries where such a Church was once established, or of refraining from establishing a national Church in the countries where there never has been such a Church. It is a matter of surprise that so little attention should be paid on the one side or the other to the ascertained results of dissociating a State as far as possible from religion.

It may be well, however, before discussing the probable consequences of disestablishment, to clear the question of disendowment out of the way ; for the endowment of a Church is a pecuniary matter, and the association of the State with religion deserves to be treated on higher than pecuniary grounds. Speakers on political

platforms and in the House of Commons generally assume that disestablishment and disendowment must go together. But there is no necessary connection between them. Disestablishment is, in theory at least, the assertion of a great political or spiritual principle; disendowment is a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. In fact disendowment may be said to vulgarise disestablishment, as robbing it more or less of the religious character which properly belongs to it.

It may indeed be admitted that the State is entitled to take away from a national Church its property, or a part of its property, when the Church is disestablished, if the property is used for such purposes as are injurious or not beneficial to the nation, or if it is so large that it exceeds all possible or legitimate needs of the Church. Even then the secularisation of ecclesiastical property may not unnaturally cause a shock or pain to the Christian conscience; concurrent endowment, if it is possible, is better than secularisation; but I do not think that the partial disendowment of the Church of Ireland or of any Church similarly situated can justly be regarded as an act of national sacrilege or

injustice. But when it is proposed to divert the property or a large part of the property of the Church in Wales from ecclesiastical to secular uses, that is a proposal to take away from the Church in Wales property which is needed by the clergy for their spiritual work, which is well and wisely used, which is already insufficient, and which cannot be forfeited without a loss of spiritual efficiency. To take away in such circumstances property which has been held by an individual or a society for many generations is to strike a blow at the roots of all property. It is needless to say that, in speaking of the property of the Church, I mean the property of all the corporations in which the property of the Church is vested ; there is no property belonging to the Church as a Church. The plea which is sometimes advanced that the Church, if despoiled of her property, would soon become enriched by the liberality of her members is in my eyes not only inadequate but hypocritical. A man who sets fire to his neighbour's house and thereby destroys his neighbour's property may evoke the generosity of friends and acquaintances towards the victim of his criminal action ;

but that result has never been held to justify arson.

Any project, then, for disendowing the indigent Church in Wales, or, in other words, for depriving the Church of Wales, when she needs larger funds, of such funds as she now possesses for the spiritual work which her clergy are admittedly doing in a self-sacrificing spirit and to the benefit of the Welsh nation, is not a friendly but a hostile proposal. It seems to emanate from men who do not wish well to the spiritual work of the Church, from men who care less for religion than for the gratification of the ill-will unhappily arising out of religious differences. That such ill-will is not impossible, although it is, as I frankly hope, exceptional, must be evident to everybody who has read the chapter on Religious Equality in the book called *The Radical Programme*. *The Radical Programme* was published in the year 1885; it bore the imprimatur of Mr. Chamberlain. Mr. Gladstone<sup>1</sup> indeed repudiated the plan of disestablishment as put forward in it; but *The Radical Programme* expressed upon ecclesiastical as upon other

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Edinburgh, November 11, 1885.

matters the views of advanced Radicals a quarter of a century ago, and it is enough for my purpose to show that these views have been and are entertained not by all but by some advocates of disestablishment. Let me then quote the language of *The Radical Programme* in regard to (1) Ancient churches, *i.e.* churches built before 1818 ; (2) Cathedrals :—

“ It was proposed that ancient churches should be vested in a parochial board, to be elected by the ratepayers. This board should have power to deal with them for the general benefit of the parishioners in such ways as it may determine. In many cases the parish churches would be let at a nominal rent to Episcopalians ; in some, if not in many, it would be used by one sect at one hour, and by another at another hour. It is possible that under certain circumstances the board would sell the fabric out and out to the Episcopalian or other religious body. It is also conceivable that it might be used for secular purposes of a public kind, as meeting-houses are, and churches have been before now.”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to estimate the violence which

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, p. 163.

this proposal does to the religious conviction and sentiment not only of Churchmen but, I may hope, of the great majority of English Christians.

But the writer of *The Radical Programme* does not stop at the ancient parish churches. The cathedrals are the peculiar glories of England. There are no buildings, secular or sacred, to which so many associations of the national history cling as the cathedrals. It is the cathedrals, if any buildings in the country, which may claim to be spared even the touch of a profaning, sacrilegious hand. The writer seems himself to experience a certain emotion at the thought of "those sublime monuments which are the pride and glory of the land, which command the awe and move the admiration of Churchmen, Non-conformists, and Rationalists all alike." Yet he does not shrink from contemplating the possibility of these "sublime monuments" being secularised.

"The cathedrals, abbeys, and other monumental buildings of like magnitude and history," he says, "could only pass under the control of the nation, and be held, maintained, and administered for such uses as Parliament might from time to time determine, and under direct and special

responsibility to the national government, as distinguished from any lesser authority, whether parochial or sectarian."<sup>1</sup>

Again, I say, such a proposal is a cruel offence to the religious conviction and sentiment of Churchmen and Christians. If it were put into practice, or an attempt were made to put it into practice, it would split the nation into opposing camps actuated by the most bitter feelings of religious animosity.

But I refuse to believe that this is the policy of religiously minded Nonconformists. If disestablishment comes to pass, I do not think the Church in Wales will be stripped of its scanty emoluments; I do not think the cathedrals and the parish churches of England will be rendered liable to secularisation. I think better things of my Nonconformist fellow-Christians; I believe that all which is best in Nonconformity desires not to offend but to respect the religious sentiment of Churchmen, and not to injure but to advance the spiritual life of the Church.

Yet there is a danger, and the Nonconformists must know there is a danger, of a rancorous

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, p. 164.

feeling, which is wholly alien from the spirit of Jesus Christ, insinuating itself into the hearts of Christian sectaries. When one Nonconformist minister in England can speak of the Church as ruining more souls than she saves, and another can make use of Christmas Day for taking the *Magnificat* as the basis of a sermon in which he anticipates the scattering of proud Churchmen “in the imagination of their hearts,” and the “putting down the mighty from their seat,” they show themselves to be little better than fanatics of heresy. What is to be said of the following passage, which I take from a Welsh newspaper<sup>1</sup> :—

“No better picture can be given of the Church of England in Wales and her Clergy than that which is given in Isaiah lvi. 10, 11, and Titus i. 11, 12. Their hypocritical prayers are nothing better than blight-breeding curses; and the ‘Church family’ is no blessing to any, for they are sodden with deceit and shame. These lazy dogs of the Church are unable to preach, move, or work. They are blind teachers, soft-brained and dumb, slow-bellied and beastly. Their mission

<sup>1</sup> The *Aerin*, quoted by J. L. Walton in *Down with the Church*, p. 75.

is wantonness and oppression, and their visits are accompanied with nothing better than the fierce breathings of hell."

No language ever used by the extremest of High Churchmen against Nonconformity has been baser or blacker than this. Yet in spite of it all I believe that the majority of Nonconformists both in England and Wales entertain a grateful and respectful feeling towards the national Church. I believe they recognise the historical value of her services to the nation in the long centuries of English history. I believe the motive underlying the agitation of Liberationism is not mean or cruel or vindictive ; it is rather a passion, however strangely distorted at times, for liberty and equality. The history of Nonconformity, as I conceive it, has been one long protest for the rights of the individual conscience ; and it is the supposed violation of those rights, as evinced by the preference of one religious denomination to others, which stirs the Nonconformists to unreasonable and unnatural virulence. Let me then ask them to put aside angry feelings, and to reflect calmly and soberly upon the probable consequences of disestablishment in England.

It will be well to state first, in regard to disestablishment and disendowment, certain consequences which are sometimes anticipated, whether hopefully or fearfully, but are not, I think, at all likely to be realised. In estimating these consequences I shall depend a good deal upon the example of the Churches abroad in communion with the Church of England at home. It has been my fortune to travel over the British Empire. There is no great colony or dependency of the Empire where I have not at one time or another preached the Gospel. Everywhere I have studied with an especial interest the conditions of ecclesiastical life, and it is this study which is the basis of my present conclusions.

When it is predicted that the Church of England, if disestablished and disendowed, will be destroyed, or so far disabled as to lose a great part of the spiritual potency belonging to her as a religious organisation, it is probable that nobody believes the prediction but the person who utters it. The Church existed before establishment and endowment, and she would survive disestablishment and disendowment. She would not be destroyed either by pressure from without or by

dissidence within. It may be true that there are enemies of the Church who would not scruple to use the policy of disestablishment and disendowment as a means of attacking the vital principles of the Church. Thus in *The Radical Programme* occur the following words : “The chief precedent in the Irish Act to be most avoided is the re-creation and re-endowment of that Church which was supposed to have been dissolved into its original and constituent atoms.”<sup>1</sup> No other meaning can be attached to these words than that it would be proper to change by a Liberationist policy the ecclesiastical system of the Church from an Episcopcal to a Congregational basis. The writer of *The Radical Programme* sympathises with this policy. He refers to “the dread and suspicion of a great ecclesiastical corporation endowed with vast revenues, animated by a rigorous spirit of discipline, and uncontrolled by the moderating hand of neutral authority.”<sup>2</sup> What is doubtful in his eyes is the possibility of organising the Church upon a basis which all Churchmen would disapprove and disown.

<sup>1</sup> *The Radical Programme*, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

“The project,” he says, “assumes that the disestablished Church will divide itself into an indefinite number of groups. We must, however, remember that the Church will still be episcopal and not congregational, and that episcopacy, especially where it has such deep traditional roots and so ancient an organisation as in England, is essentially a system of centralisation.”

But the more moderate advocates of Liberationism look forward not to the destruction of the Church by “dissolution into its original and constituent atoms,” as the result of pressure applied to the Church by Parliamentary legislation, but rather to the disintegration of the Church as the result of internal conflict among the different parties within the Church. The Church, as they conceive, is now not properly one Church but a combination of Churches; High Churchmen, Low Churchmen, and Broad Churchmen are held together, not by agreement or sympathy in doctrine, nor even by a common allegiance to the Prayer Book, but by the national established and endowed constitution of the Church. They anticipate, however, that if the centripetal force of establishment and endowment were done away, the several

parties in the Church, like so many antagonistic elements, would fly asunder.

But the experience of the Colonies, and indeed of Ireland, seems to be opposed to this gloomy anticipation. Nowhere has the Church been destroyed or disintegrated by the disestablishment or by the absence of establishment. It is possible that, where disestablishment takes place, a certain leakage from the Church to the Roman Catholic Church or to some other Church may occur, and all the more if the Church is exposed, as in Ireland, to severe denominational rivalry. But upon the whole the Church remains everywhere a solid body, whether in the Colonies or in Ireland or in the United States, and this a body continuing in full communion with the Mother Church, and reflecting in all her many offices and ministrations the spirit of the Mother Church at home.

It is the fashion to speak lightly of the results achieved by the clergy and the laity of the Church abroad. I can only say that in my travels I have felt more strongly how much has been done than even how much remains to be done. In all parts of the Empire, nay, in all parts of the world where English Churchmen and Churchwomen

live, churches and schools have been built, clergy have been ordained or have been sent out from home, the means of grace have been supplied regularly, if not constantly; and never have I realised so deeply the unity and the catholicity of the Church as when in some remote village of Australia or New Zealand or Canada or India I have listened to the same prayers as I knew to be ascending on the same day from many thousands of sanctuaries at home. And not only has the Church remained as a distinct world-wide organisation, but she has retained her comprehensive and catholic character. Here and there the Church of the Colonies has acquired a special colour or tone of ecclesiastical feeling. The Church in South Africa, for example, is predominantly High Church; the Church in Australia is, or at least was, predominantly Low Church; but everywhere, or almost everywhere, the three parties which make up the Church of England at home have found shelter within her pale all over the world.

I do not anticipate that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England would do much, if indeed it did anything, to quicken the spiritual life of the clergy or of the

Church as a whole. Such new life may perhaps come to a Church as the result of severance from the State, if the Church has been languid or feeble before. It may have come to the Church of Ireland in 1869. But whatever be the faults or failings of the Church of England at the present time, spiritual apathy is not one among them; and as it has been shown in her recent history that the revival of spirituality is compatible with establishment and endowment, so too the absence of establishment and endowment is no guarantee of superior spirituality. So far as the phenomena of the present day warrants a judgment, the ministers of the so-called Free Churches are fully as political as the clergy of the Church of England, and the clergy of the Church of England are fully as political abroad as at home. The political spirit is a danger to which all Churches and all clergy or ministers are liable. It is not peculiar to any one denomination. The clergy of an established Church do not necessarily yield to it, nor are the clergy of a disestablished Church necessarily free from it.

It is not doubtful, then, that the Church of

England, after the crisis of disestablishment and disendowment, would remain in England, as elsewhere, a powerful undivided Christian Church, without the special obligations and opportunities which her national character confers upon her, but with all the fullness of her ancient creeds, offices, and liturgies, of her historical tradition and her ecclesiastical system. There is in some quarters, and especially among Nonconformists, a hope that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church would tend towards the reunion of the Church with the other reformed Churches or denominations in England. This hope is pious and natural; if it were probable, it would be well worth considering as an argument; but the experience of the Colonies and of the United States is dead against it. Nowhere has the Church become amalgamated with any non-Episcopalian body; nowhere has the Church shown any disposition to surrender or compromise her Episcopal system of government. There have been proposals for a union in the Colonies, in Australia especially; there have been similar proposals at home; but no authoritative voice has been raised among Churchmen in favour of

reunion, except upon the basis of Episcopacy. So far as I am able to judge, the relation of the Church to Nonconformity in the Colonies is almost exactly the same as it is at home. In one part of the world there may be a more friendly spirit between them than in another, but upon the whole they are neither nearer to each other nor further apart. If any difference exists, it seems to be that, where the Church of England inclines, as in South Africa, to high Anglicanism, it drives Presbyterians to a greater distance, and it loses some of its members to the Presbyterian denominations. But there is no reason to suppose that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England would be a measure tending towards Christian reunion.

It is not altogether easy to decide whether such a measure would sweeten the social intercourse of Churchmen and Nonconformists, especially of the clergy of the Church and their brethren the Nonconformist ministers. Some Nonconformists indeed seem, or have seemed, to feel that the clergy, as being officials of the national Church, occupy a privileged position in society, and that this privilege is ■ source of

offence to Nonconformists. They complain of living under a kind of social tyranny. Mr. Miall, who was so prominent a champion of Liberationism in its early days, wrote a series of articles in *The Nonconformist* newspaper during the year 1866 upon "The Social Influences of the State Church." His articles may be described as a long tirade against the social pretensions of the Anglican clergy. How bitter his feeling was the following extracts will show:—

"If sometimes the demeanour of Nonconformists discloses beneath the surface a deep sense of the indignity done them, if they wince under the heel which is deliberately set upon them, it ought hardly to be treated as a matter of astonishment. Human nature is everywhere the same, and the disadvantages resulting from favouritism, where reason and religion point out that all should be dealt with alike, have the same effect upon it, whatever may be the form in which they are embodied. In social respects the State Church unquestionably is exasperating towards all those who stand outside its pale. We should be silly to confess that we are not conscious of any soreness of feeling on account

of it. We do not hesitate to avow that we are, though not more so, we believe, than members of the Establishment would be if they were to change places with us.”<sup>1</sup> And again:—

“As a rule, and in respect of free social intercourse, the two parties do not mix. There may be little bitterness of feeling between them—though, unhappily, so much cannot be said in reference to many parishes—but they are interlaced by no friendly ties, they have very little in common, they are ignorant of each other’s affairs, and do not care to be enlightened; and, like oil and water, although they may touch each other they do not coalesce.”<sup>2</sup>

There is reason to hope that this picture is somewhat of an exaggeration. It may have been truer to life half a century ago than it is to-day. The Nonconformists of to-day are, I think, apt to dwell overmuch upon past grievances. But the age of inequality, like the age of persecution, lies, I hope, in the background of time. Possibly in some rural parishes the clergyman here and there may still stand upon his dignity, at the cost of injuring and paining Nonconformists. More

<sup>1</sup> *The Nonconformist*, 1866, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

often I think it happens that if the clergyman is modest and kindly, the Nonconformists themselves desire him to take the lead in social movements, or if a Nonconformist takes the lead, the clergyman readily consents to be a follower.

My experience is that such social distinction as exists between the clergy and Nonconformist ministers is far more personal than ecclesiastical. It does not differ from the distinction between the clergy who have been educated at Oxford and Cambridge and the other clergy of the Church. Wherever a clergyman educated elsewhere than at Oxford or Cambridge or a Nonconformist minister is socially equal in his personal culture and bearing to the clergy generally, he takes his place among them on a footing of complete equality. Social exclusiveness, so far as it remains, is a survival of conditions which are happily disappearing. But there can be no doubt that disestablishment and disendowment will not produce the effect of converting a man, whether Churchman or Nonconformist, who is not a gentleman into a gentleman. If the Church of England is in some degree the Church of the upper classes, this social

superiority, which is not always a spiritual gain, may reflect itself in the character of her clergy. But in the United States of America and in the Colonies the same distinction exists ; it is quite as strongly emphasised as at home. There too it is not ecclesiastical but personal. If the Nonconformists in general were socially raised, or the clergy of the Church of England were socially lowered, there might be some approximation between them ; but the one result is, I believe, as much desired by Churchmen as by Nonconformists, and the other would, I hope, be as little welcomed by Nonconformists as by Churchmen. Disestablishment and disendowment would in my opinion be more likely to lower the status of the clergy than to raise the status of Nonconformist ministers.

So far, then, it may be concluded that, if the Liberationist policy took effect, it would not produce the consequences which are sometimes anticipated from it. There is one consequence which would certainly not follow from this policy. Some of the clergy of the Church, especially in the High Church party, assume or imagine that, if the Church were emancipated from the tram-

mels of the State, they would enjoy a freedom which at present they lack ; they would be able to gratify their sacerdotal or ceremonial proclivities. This is, I believe, the last thing which would probably happen. For the clergy then as now would hold their offices upon certain definite terms, and if they broke those terms the appeal would lie as now to the secular Courts of Law. Disestablishment and disendowment would afford no relief from the obligation of contracts, but they would call into play the energy of laymen in the Church ; and as the laity are upon the whole less favourably inclined to sacerdotalism or ritualism than the clergy, it is probable that the High Church clergy would find themselves more strongly controlled than they are now, when the difficulty of carrying out the law because of the association between the Church and the State is the main obstacle to ecclesiastical discipline.

The policy of disestablishment and disendowment would not indeed be an unmixed injury to the Church. But when I try to ask myself as dispassionately as possible how far the Church would be spiritually benefited by the severance of her present association with the State, the

answer is not so easy as it might be expected to be. Let me repeat that I am inquiring wholly and solely what will be the benefit of disestablishment to religion; how far it will help to make the ministry of the Church more faithful, more vigorous, more successful, more loyal to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ.

It is of course possible to argue that the national recognition of the Church gives the Church a privileged position in comparison with other denominations, and that any such position of privilege is unjust and unwelcome to Nonconformists. This is a perfectly valid argument for disestablishment, although not, I think, for disendowment; but it is not the argument which Nonconformists most frequently advance, and against it may be set the disadvantages to which the Church through association with the State is plainly subjected. But it is the spiritual consequence of disestablishment and disendowment, the question whether the Church being disestablished and disendowed would do her work better than she does it now, which is the main point at issue, and this is principally a question for Churchmen. It may reasonably be

supposed that Nonconformists know best what is best for Nonconformity, and Churchmen what is good for the Church.

It is possible, then, that the Church would gain something in spirituality. It does not seem probable that she would gain much; for if a languid Church may be quickened into new spiritual life by the shock of disestablishment and disendowment, the Church of England is not at the present time a languid but an energetic and self-sacrificing Church. I cannot look upon the presence of the bishops in the House of Lords as tending to secularise the Church. The bishops may or may not have cast their influence in times past on the side of progress and reform. Probably there is no Churchman who does not wish that they had been more liberal and more sympathetic with causes making for the good of the people. But if there were no bishops in the House of Lords, then the clergy would, I suppose, be eligible to the House of Commons; and there is nothing which would be so dangerous or prejudicial to the spiritual life of the clergy as the candidature for Parliamentary seats. The presence of a certain number of bishops in the House of Lords is a set-off against

the exclusion of all the clergy from the House of Commons, and it tends to spiritualise rather than to secularise the office of the clergy. In fact there is now a tacit understanding that the bishops who are members of the House of Lords will not vote upon strictly political questions.

Again it is possible that disestablishment and disendowment might evoke a large generosity from Churchmen and Churchwomen. They are not, I am afraid, usually so generous as Non-conformists ; they have not equally learnt the duty and the privilege of paying for religion ; but whatever generosity was evoked would, at least for a long time, be counterbalanced by the loss entailed in disendowment, and I see no probability that the Church, if divested of her property, would prove to be stronger and better equipped for missionary work at home and abroad than she is now.

Again it is possible, although I can hardly say it is likely, that the clergy, if they ceased to be ministers of a national Church, would mix on easier and happier terms with Nonconformist ministers. The experience of the Colonies and of India does not show that a happier relation

is the consequence of disestablishment or of non-establishment. It is certain too that the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church could not be effected without a long and fierce controversy—such a controversy as would leave behind it bitter sentiments of indigation for many a long year to come.

So far as it is possible for me to form a judgment on the favourable results of disestablishing and disendowing the Church of England, the only two positive gains would be these:—

1. That the Church would derive a new strength from the quickened interest of the laity.
2. That the Church would gain a power of self-legislation.

Any Churchman who has travelled over the Colonies knows what a latent power lies in the Christian devotion of the laity. Again and again it is some pious layman who maintains month after month, if not year after year, the ministrations of religion in parts of the world where the regular presence of a clergyman is impossible. But the laity are practically debarred from taking part in the government of the national Church at home. The two Convocations are but

imperfectly representative of the clergy—they are not representative of the laity at all. The Houses of Laymen and the Representative Church Council afford the laity a chance of expressing their opinions on matters of ecclesiastical interest; but they possess no more legislative power, and even less official dignity, than the two Convocations themselves. In the United States of America, in Ireland and in many of the Colonies, Christian laymen, feeling that they exercise a real influence upon the fortunes of the Church, are content to spend much time and thought in assisting her deliberations and in giving effect to her policy.

The difficulty of reform in the Church is, I think, apt to be a little exaggerated. Parliament is not, of course, a body exclusively composed or necessarily representative of Churchmen. It cannot initiate, it cannot seriously modify ecclesiastical legislation, without giving offence to the Church. But as a rule it has been found within the last half-century that, where reform is desired by a great majority of Churchmen, it is sooner or later effected by Act of Parliament. The difficulty in the way of reform is not so much that the Houses of

Parliament are unwilling to enact it, but that Churchmen are unable to agree upon it. At the present time the revision of the Prayer Book in response to the Royal Letters of Business is impeded by the action not of politicians but of Churchmen. Yet reforms come about surely if slowly, and the delay in accomplishing them, although sometimes it is irritating, is upon the whole tranquillising, and it saves the Church from the peril of dissension and disruption. The hope of the future is that the Church of England, like the Church of Scotland, may be legislatively invested with greater facilities for self-reform.

But it is now time to consider in what way the national acknowledgment of religion in England through the existence of a national Church is favourable to religion, to Christianity, and to the supreme interests of the national life.

(1) It is sometimes argued that a nation is a Christian nation so long as it preserves a national Church, and that if the national Church were disestablished and disendowed, the nation would cease to be Christian. This is, I think,

a hyperbolical statement. A nation is Christian if its citizens, or the majority of its citizens, are Christians. If they cease to be Christians, it ceases *ipso facto* to be a Christian nation. There is no national established Church in the United States of America, yet the United States is a Christian nation. Mr. Bryce puts the case well when he says :—

“The whole matter may, I think, be summed up by saying that Christianity is in fact understood to be, though not the legally established religion, yet the national religion. So far from thinking their Commonwealth godless, the Americans conceive that the religious character of a Government consists in nothing but the religious belief of the individual citizens, and the conformity of their conduct to that belief. They feel the general acceptance of Christianity to be one of the main sources of their national prosperity, and their nation the special object of the Divine favour.”<sup>1</sup>

All this may be true; yet it may be true also that a nation like Great Britain cannot destroy its historical association with Christi-

<sup>1</sup> *The American Commonwealth*, vol. iii. p. 474.

anity except at the cost of inflicting a blow upon Christianity itself. The recent severance between Church and State in France, whatever may be its ultimate effect, was undoubtedly intended and regarded as a national abnegation of the Christian faith. Churchmen and Nonconformists alike may be more or less blinded by partiality to the religious effect of establishment and disestablishment. Upon this point no judgment can be more valuable than that of a highly enlightened and thoroughly dispassionate Christian observer belonging to a foreign nation. The late Canon Liddon published in the *Times*, on October 17, 1885, a letter<sup>1</sup> which he had received from Dr. Döllinger upon Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian address. Speaking of disestablishment, Dr. Döllinger said :—

“ For my part, I think that any such measure should be firmly resisted. It would be a blow to Christianity not only in England but throughout Europe. . . . Without maintaining that intimate association with the Civil power had always been an advantage to religion, or that

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lord Selborne in *A Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment*, p. xxvii.

the existing relations between Church and State in England are of an ideal description, or that, if disestablished and disendowed, the Church of England would perish as a religious body, or that she might not, after an interval, enjoy a more vigorous life than now—at least in some respects—he yet held that the broadest and most serious aspect of such a catastrophe would be that of a blow to the cause of religion throughout Christendom. If such a measure were adopted by a country with a history like that of England, there could be no mistake as to its significance. It would be well understood alike by the friends and the foes of Christianity in Germany, in France, throughout the civilised world."

The deliberate judgment of such a man upon such a matter may be sound or unsound, correct or incorrect; but nobody who cares for Christianity can disregard it.

(2) A national Church seems intrinsically to possess the advantage of setting a true ideal of life before the eyes of the nation. For materialism is the besetting danger of nations as well as of individuals in the present day. But to

assume that the State is concerned only with the material interests of the people is to lower the State in the eyes of the citizens themselves. A national Church is, then, a witness to the spiritual side of the nation's life. It is too much forgotten that in all countries the mass of the citizens take their tone more or less from the State. No doubt they themselves constitute the State, but in turn the State influences them; what the State honours they honour; what the State neglects they neglect, or are apt to neglect. If, then, the State proclaims its indifference to the religious interests of the nation, the nation loses a potent motive to religion.

I do not think that any one who studies the social and political phenomena of the United States will doubt that nothing is so greatly needed there as a counterpoise to the influence of wealth. Wealth in the United States assumes an importance at present happily unknown in the European world. It colours the whole life of parties and States; it is the predominant unrivalled power in the national life. There is good reason to fear that wealth is becoming too

strong an influence in English society. But where an aristocracy exists, where an established Church exists, these are forces counterbalancing in some measure the exclusive or excessive regard for riches.

American society affords many object lessons to the nations of the Old World. It has been enabled to make experiments such as would not have been tolerated in long-established communities. Sometimes the experiment has been happy in itself, sometimes it has been facilitated by the lavish resources of the Western world, sometimes it has been a failure or an evil. The predominance of wealth has proved an evil threatening to sap the foundations of the national life. It is my opinion that one reason for the deleterious influence of wealth in the United States has been the absence of institutions which would in their nature draw to themselves a part at least of the energy now concentrated upon the pursuit of material riches. Among these influences one is the peerage, the other is a national Church. That neither of these institutions is free from grave defect, I know only too well; I am merely concerned to show that they tend to

counterbalance the paramount authority of the purse.

(3) Another consideration of much importance is, I think, this: When I look forward to the future it seems to me that all governments are exposed to the risk of losing the respect of the communities or the classes which they govern. The loss of respect for authority is one of the striking phenomena in the present day. It attains its extreme form in Anarchism and Nihilism; and the curious feature of Anarchism or Nihilism is that its votaries entertain as little respect for the president of the freest republic in the world as for the hereditary representative of the most ancient monarchy. They hate not a particular form of government, but all government; they aspire not to reform but to destroy social conditions. Their opinions are not infrequently—they are perhaps usually—associated with the repudiation of religious faith and religious sanctions. In England, it is true, disregard of the law and of government generally has not attained any large proportions; it is confined to a few sentimental theorists, or to persons who aim at reaching political aims by unconstitutional

methods ; but the spirit is there, and it may show itself soon or late in the same wild actions.

There was never greater need than now to hedge government with divinity. There is need to preach anew the apostolic message that “the powers that be are ordained of God.” But religion is the supreme sanction of government. For religion, or at least Christianity, teaches that the hereditary or elective governor, as soon as he attains his office, becomes invested with a certain divine sanction ; and as the king is the head of the State, so the divine sanction resting upon him is supreme.

Of the ceremonies which attest the historical connection of the Church in England with the State, the most august and sacred is the coronation of the Sovereign in Westminster Abbey. No other ceremony can vie with it in dignity or antiquity. The nearest approach to it was once the coronation of the kings of France in the Cathedral of Rheims ; but that coronation has passed away, and the coronation in Westminster Abbey still survives. It can be traced backward in unbroken line to the day when the crown of

England was laid by an archbishop's trembling hands before the high altar of the Abbey Church upon William the Conqueror.

What is the effect of the coronation service? It is the "sacring" or consecration of the Sovereign. He enters the Abbey as the hereditary successor to the throne; he leaves it as also the consecrated representative of God. But if there were no national Church, the coronation service would in all probability die a natural death. For a mixed coronation service, in which the clergy of all the Churches would participate, is a practical impossibility. The coronation service must be the service of one Church. If there were no national Church, it is far more probable that the King would not be crowned at all than that he would be crowned at one time in Westminster Abbey, at another in Westminster Cathedral, and at another in the City Temple. But it is the coronation which is the highest title of the Throne to the homage of the nation. I would earnestly beg the advocates of disestablishment to reflect whether in the name of religious equality they may not imperil the historical religious character of British sovereignty altogether.

The late Bishop Creighton, speaking of the theory which would “strip the State of all connection with the religious life of the nation,” wrote as follows:—

“There is no political axiom which is to me more repugnant, because it degrades the conception of the State, which I for one wish to uphold at all costs. I know the axiom in its mediæval form, when Pope Gregory VII. laid down that temporal authority had its origin in the instigation of the devil, and drew the conclusion that spiritual authority was of necessity its master and director. I regard with suspicion any form in which such an opinion is revived. To me the institutions by which my country is governed are precious, and I should sorely grieve to see their claims on my allegiance diminished. I think that every man ought to be taught to regard his citizenship as something to be prized and exercised with a full sense of conscientious responsibility. I can think of nothing so tending to debase the ideal of the State as talk about ‘freeing the Church from the bondage of the State.’ This representation of the State as something inherently unholy, something stifling to

spiritual aspirations, something from which the high-minded man longs to be delivered, is very dangerous teaching, and indeed is not seriously meant. But disestablishment, or, as I prefer to call it, the repudiation of a Christian basis of the State, would go far to give real vitality to such opinions.”<sup>1</sup>

(4) Again, a national Church is the one only possible guarantee for the universality of religious worship and teaching in all parts of the country. There is no ecclesiastical system at all comparable to the parochial system of the Church of England. For the national Church by its parochial system not only gives every citizen a title to the spiritual help of some minister of religion, but imposes upon some minister a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of every citizen. If this provision is good for the rich, it is still better for the poor. For rich men who are religious can take care of themselves; they can pay for the spiritual ministrations which they desire. But the clergyman of the national Church is the poor man’s friend. He is the one person on whom

<sup>1</sup> *The Church and the Nation*, p. 33.

every man or woman possesses a claim. Under a voluntary system of religion a Church necessarily gravitates in some degree towards people of more or less property. It is only a national Church which can insure the presence of a resident clergyman in every parish, however destitute, however degraded. Let me quote a passage from a charge delivered by the present Archbishop of Canterbury when he was Bishop of Rochester in 1894. Speaking of the clergy as living in their parishes, he says :—

“ I have called this habitual residence a distinctive feature of our national Church. I think we sometimes forget how emphatic the distinction is. Look at it thus. . . . Taking three of our poorest and most populous South London deaneries—Lambeth, Southwark, and Newington—with a total population of 424,234, the facts seem to be these: There are therein fifty-one parishes with 137 resident clergy of the Church of England. There are also in that area, to the best of my belief, thirty-two chapels belonging either to the Baptists, the Independents, or the Presbyterians. So far as the ordinary books of reference inform us, only thirteen ministers of

these chapels are, in our sense of the word, 'resident.' " <sup>1</sup>

But it is the residence of the clergyman among his people which is half the battle. It is that which makes him their friend ; it is that which gives him a direct personal knowledge of their needs ; it is that which helps him or should help him, if he is worthy, to speak as their champion.

A national Church by its parochial system affords, as nothing else does or can afford, a spiritual provision for every man, woman, or child born into the country, unless a man or a woman for himself or herself or for the children deliberately prefers some other system of religious administration to the system provided by the national Church.

Can it be said that religious worship will be equally assured after the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church ? that it will be equally assured when all religious bodies are placed upon an equality ?

The religious influence of a national Church can be shown in the following way : I have spent

<sup>1</sup> "A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Rochester," October 29, 30, 31, 1894, by Randall T. Davidson, D.D., nineteenth Bishop, p. 3.

many Sundays of my life at sea upon ships sailing under the British flag. Only too often it happens that the conflicting religious interests of clergy, Roman Catholic priests, and Nonconformist ministers would put a difficulty in the way of divine worship. But because there is a national Church, there is always in the morning divine worship according to the rites of the Church of England. I know how greatly Nonconformists value this service; I know how sorry they would be to abandon it. But it takes place, and can only take place, without dispute, because it is prescribed as being the service of the national Church.

The coronation in Westminster Abbey is the consecration of British sovereignty. But what happened at the inauguration of the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth? There the animosity between the religious bodies was so acute that no minister of religion was allowed to take part in the inaugural service. A few prayers were read by the Governor-General. But the difference between the coronation service in the Abbey and such a ceremony in the Parliament House at Melbourne is a measure of the loss which would be incurred by leaving public religious observances to such a

chance as the survival of the fittest or a fight among the different religious denominations.

(5) It must not be forgotten that every nation is subject to strange phases of opinion. There may come a wave of irreligion passing over the national life—it was so in France at the time of the Revolution—and such a wave may easily sweep away foundations of a voluntary religious system; but upon a national established and endowed Church it beats in vain, and when the storm subsides and the waves are stilled, the national Church lifts her head uninjured and unmoved. The national Church reflects the permanent religious temper of the nation, because it is not, nor ever can be long out of touch with the national life. No doubt Erastianism, if it is a principle logically carried out, may do grave wrong to the spirituality of the Church; but in so far as Erastianism tends to create or accentuate sympathy between the Church and the nation, it does good rather than injury to both. Churches and religious bodies too often run into extremes; they become narrow, bigoted, and one-sided; they are governed by the men of least responsibility, and they lose influence over the national life. I

cannot think that the effect of association with the State upon the Church has been altogether evil. It has preserved the equilibrium of the Church ; it has rendered the Church a power such as no voluntary religion could be in the national history ; it has engendered a broad, tolerant, equable spirit which has rendered the Church of England, in a sense in which no other Church has been, the home of free thought, and high culture, and generous sympathy with the best aspirations of the English people.

My time is spent. It only remains for me to lay once more before you the general considerations which should, I think, influence judgment upon the policy of maintaining or destroying the national Church. They are these :—

1. The association of the State with religion is the higher ideal of national life.
2. A national Church invests Government in all its forms with the sanction and the sanctity of religion.
3. The severance of the State from religion is no original principle of Nonconformity.
4. There is no necessary logical connection between disestablishment and disendowment.

5. A national Church affords the only possible guarantee for the universality of religious teaching and religious practice.

6. But a Church cannot remain national unless it is at once the predominant religious body in the nation and also sympathetic with the religious life of the nation as a whole.

7. It is therefore essential to the maintenance of the established and endowed Church of England that the clergy and the laity of the Church should not accentuate, but as far as possible should minimise, their points of difference from other Christians in the land, and should aim at reconstructing the federal union of all Christian bodies under the sheltering guidance of the national Church.

What the future may hold in store is known to God alone. But whether the national Church shall remain established and endowed or not, no Churchman may forget that neither establishment nor endowment is vital to the being of the Church. The one thing vital is communion with her Divine Lord and Master. "Without Me," He said—" Apart from Me"—" ye can do nothing." If His spirit and His presence are lost, the Church is

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dying or dead. But so long as He is with her, then whether she be established or disestablished, endowed or disendowed, she can go her way in peace; she can do the sacred work appointed for her until He comes again.

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Elder, 1911.  
vi, 132p. 21cm.

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